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ABSTRACT

In this book, Bernard van Leer Foundation programs in Israel that combined early childhood education and community development approaches across a 10-year period are described. Chapter (1) provide an introduction; (2) discuss the evolution of this combined approach, its theoretical roots in the separate disciplines of early childhood education and community development, and the interlinking of the two; (3) trace the work of the Foundation in Israel; (4) provide a case study of the Ofakim project, an early education and community development project in a development town; (5) discuss strategies and tactics of intervention for social change and empowerment; (6) describe the role of local women paraprofessionals, their selection, training, and status in their communities; (7) describe the wide range of home visiting programs in Foundation-supported projects in Israel; (8) illustrate the variety of programs which can be organized outside the home in community-based early childhood projects/programs in clinics, family day care centers, parent-run cooperative nurseries, community-based preschool provision, enrichment and activity centers, and resource and training centers; and (9) discuss the Foundation's dissemination projects. Appendix 1 provides an encapsulated description of the major projects in Israel supported by the Bernard van Leer Foundation in the past and at present. Appendix 2 discusses the background to educational disadvantage in Israel. (RH)

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PATHS TO EMPOWERMENT

Ten years of early childhood work in Israel

RUTH PAZ

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Bernard van Leer Foundation

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About the Bernard van Leer Foundation

What is the Bernard van Leer Foundation?

The Foundation takes its name from Bernard van Leer, a Dutch industrialist who died in 1958 and gave the entire share capital of his worldwide enterprise for humanitarian purposes.

What does the Foundation do?

The Foundation supports innovative projects which are designed to improve the educational, social and developmental opportunities of children from birth to eight years of age. Over 100 major projects are currently being suppported in over 40 countries around the world including both industrialised and developing nations. In all cases, the focus is on those children and communities that are least able to benefit from educational and developmental opportunities because of social and other forms of disadvantage. These include the children of ethnic and cultural minorities, children living in urban slums, shanty towns, and remote rural areas, and children of teenage parents.

Who organises the projects?

The Foundation does not organise or manage projects. It works with partners in the countries where the projects are located. For example, project partners include government departments, local municipalities, trade unions, academic institutions and voluntary organisations. These local partners are responsible for all aspects of a project – development, management, training, implementation, evaluation. They also contribute a proportion of the costs in terms of both money and services. A key objective in the initiation and implementation of projects is that the effectiveness of the work they succeed in developing will last long after the Foundation has withdrawn from the project.

How does the Foundation work?

The Foundation does not just give grants, it also provides technical advice, information and professional support to projects in the field. The Foundation Network consists of people associated with projects and the staff of the Foundation. An important part of the support given by the Foundation is the stimulation of exchanges of information, ideas and experiences between projects. Inter-project visits are arranged, seminars and workshops are organised, and publications based on project experiences are produced.

Cover illustration: Pia Mobouck

(continued on inside back cover)

PATHS TO EMPOWERMENT

Ten years of early childhood work in Israel

RUTH PAZ

Bernard van Leer Foundation
June 1990

About the author

Ruth Paz was born in Vienna, Austria. Following the Anschluss of Austria with Nazi Germany in 1937, she fled to England as a 'children's transport' refugee. Eventually reunited with her family, she emigrated to the United States, where she completed her secondary school education and joined a Zionist youth movement. In 1950 she married Yehudah Paz and soon after the couple emigrated to Israel, where they became founding members of a new *kibbutz* in the northern Negev region – *Kibbutz Kissufim* (the name means 'strivings'), which is their home today.

During her almost four decades of life in the *kibbutz*, Ruth Paz worked for many years in agriculture and in other branches of the *kibbutz* economy, taught English and special education and served as principal of the local primary school. Throughout the years she has been deeply involved in the life of the community and has been elected to a variety of administrative positions. At present she is serving her fourth term as general secretary of the *kibbutz*. She holds a BA degree in Behavioural Sciences from Ben Gurion University and is completing work for her MA degree in Sociology and Anthropology.

Ruth Paz was seconded by the United Kibbutz Movement to head two major Bernard van Leer Foundation-supported activities in Israel: the ground-breaking Community Education Project in Ofakim, and the establishment of the Community Education Centre at the Pinchas Sapir Regional College of the Negev, at which she worked for over a decade. During this period she also participated in a number of Bernard van Leer Foundation symposia, seminars and training workshops. This book is the outcome of the conceptual approach and the practical experience of those years of work within the Bernard van Leer Foundation framework.

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Acknowledgements

Almost by definition, this book must be seen as the joint endeavour of the many people on whose actual work and experience it is based, and of the many others who supported their endeavours.

It is hardly possible to name them all – nor perhaps desirable, for inevitably one risks the sin of ommission. However, without them there would be no book – and I wish to acknowledge my debt to them and my gratitude.

The ten years of my life which I spent in intimate association with the Bernard van Leer Foundation, initially as Director of the first community education project in Israel, in Ofakim, and later, of the Community Education Centre at the Pinchas Sapir Regional College of the Negev, were very special ones. It is a rare privilege to dream a dream and to be granted the opportunity – not to speak of the material support – to transform it into reality.

Gratitude is due first of all to the Bernard van Leer Foundation, its Board of Trustees, and its staff who made this possible. I am deeply indebted to Dr Willem Welling, fromer Executive Director of the Foundation, who was throughout unstinting in his encouragement and support, and Dr A.W. Wood, Deputy Executive Director, Programmes, whose profound understanding and empathy for the needs and aspirations of the 'disadvantaged' children and adults in our midst and passionate belief in the potential inherent in individuals and communities, played a major role in the development of community-based early childhood education and of the process of empowerment described here. A special word of thanks is also due to Dr M.C.E. van Gendt, the present Executive Director of the Foundation, without whose support this book would not have reached publication.

No less, I am indebted to my colleagues throughout the Bernard van Leer Foundation network, whose acquaintance I was privileged to make on various occasions, and whose ideas and experience served to enrich my own.

Closer to home, I acknowledge an abiding debt to the men and women of the Foundation-supported projects in Israel: professionals, para-professionals and dedicated members of the communities in which the projects took root and developed, whose story is told here. Similarly, I am grateful to my mentors and colleagues at the Department of Behavioural Sciences at Ben Gurion University and at the Pinchas Sapir Regional College of the Negev, whose ideas and knowledge, unstintingly shared, helped to shape my own.

Special thanks are due to my own kibbutz, Kissufim, and to the United Kibbutz Movement, whose direct support enabled me personally to spend ten fruitful years during which I drew on my own experience of community life in the kibbutz to help strengthen that of less privileged ones.

A word of gratitude is due to Ruth Cohen and her colleagues at the Foundation who edited my rather unwieldy text with patience and tact.

Last, but by no means least, I thank my family, who never flagged in their moral support and faith in my work.

To my husband, Yehudah, who shared in both the dream and its realisation, I dedicate this book.

Ruth Paz
Kibbutz Kissufim
April 1990

Preface

The publication of this book describing the development of the work undertaken with the support of the Bernard van Leer Foundation in Israel gives us great satisfaction. The way the projects in that small country have developed reflects, to a very large extent, the development of Foundation-supported projects in general since the late 1970s. It reflects too the development of our thinking from an approach which centred almost entirely on young children themselves to an approach which insists on the importance of the children's parents, other family members, and the community and whole environment surrounding them. It has to be recognised that this notion of community self-reliance in the provision of educational and other services is part of the governing philosophy which guided the kibbutz movement in the early years of Israeli history.

Israel is one of 40 countries in which the Foundation is supporting innovative projects in early childhood care and education. In all cases, these projects are carried out by people on the spot, people familiar with the cultural context, who understand what is needed because they are a part of that context themselves.

In this book, Ruth Paz provides us with that rare mixture of the very practical, down-to-earth experience and the theoretical basis for that experience. But even more, she shows us clearly how theory informs and shapes practice and then, in turn, the practice informs and shapes the theory.

At the heart is the story of the evolution of one project in a small development town in southern Israel. We learn to understand the importance of the community promoter, also called a para-professional, the woman from the community who learns and leads the others into learning. And then we see the gradual maturation of practices in a variety of projects in various different settings.

The publication of this book should in no way be seen as the end of the story - it is rather a report on work still in progress. That work continues in Israel as it does in many other countries. It must not be seen as a rigid model to be followed but as a compendium of real life experiences and thinking which can be built upon by all communities involved in early childhood care and education wherever they are in the world.

Rien van Gendt
Executive Director
Bernard van Leer Foundation
The Hague, May 1990

above: countries where the Bernard van Leer Foundation is supporting projects
right: Israel and the surrounding countries

TURKEY
SYRIA
IRAQ
JORDAN
EGYPT
SAUDI ARABIA

Author's foreword

This book is an attempt to summarise a decade of endeavour. In the ten years between 1977 and 1987 many of us devoted ourselves to early childhood education and community development in Israel within the framework of the community education projects which came into being during that decade with the support and guidance of the Bernard van Leer Foundation. This book is an attempt to distill the *essence* of that experience, to draw out of it that which makes it sufficiently unique for me – the author of these lines – to beg your – the reader's attention for a span, in the conviction that you may find this story interesting, useful and perhaps even important.

This *essence* is above all a strategy and an approach in its synthesis of early childhood education and community development. That is, the integration into the world of early childhood education of the values and operational modes of community development: faith in human potential, belief in the right of individuals and communities to self-determination and self-direction, awareness of their need for participation and cooperation. This combination of the perspectives of early childhood education and community development has generated effective strategies of intervention and produced a rich harvest of innovative educational programmes sharing a common denominator of parent and community participation and involvement.

This approach means working *with* rather than *for* people, to develop their innate skills and capacities in order to enable them to gain a greater measure of control over their lives; it means affirmation and reinforcement of their belief in themselves and in their own worth. It means facilitating the process by means of which people develop the ability, will and confidence to manage their own affairs; it means respecting their way of doing things without attempting to impose solutions. It is an approach no less appropriate and effective in working with children than in working with their parents and with the community at large. Its payoff is empowerment: concentric circles of empowerment of child, parent and community, challenging the stranglehold of disadvantage. Israel has been one of the key venues in which this approach has been forged. The Ofakim Community Education Project, initiated in 1977, was the pioneer. This is summarised in the Spring 1981 issue of the Bernard van Leer Foundation *Newsletter*:

> 'Change can only come from and be sustained by a community which has learnt to be autonomous, to develop and use its own resources. Outside inputs of materials and resources can be no more than a catalyst for learning by those already present who have ultimately to construct, control

> and sustain development ... For the innovator this means doing things with people rather than for them, facilitating learning rather than teaching.'

This is perhaps the appropriate point to introduce myself. I came to Israel almost 40 years ago to found a new *kibbutz* in the Negev. I was twenty years old at the time, and firmly convinced that all that was needed to change the world in general, and the particular corner of it where I had chosen to live, was a vision of what ought to be and the will to make that come about. Today I am older and perhaps wiser, and know that what is involved is indeed more complicated. However, in the process, I have become an 'expert' of sorts in community development, in a life-time spent in a community which prides itself on its autonomy in the management of its own affairs: social, municipal, economic, cultural and educational and in forging its own solutions to problems, even when these at times turn out to be less than perfect. It is to this experience, or 'expertise', that I intuitively turned when in 1977 I came to the development town of Ofakim to initiate the first of the Van Leer community education projects in Israel. I believe that my background was influential in shaping the development of the strategy and perspective described here. That initial intervention, in which I was directly and personally involved, is the source for Chapter 4, The story of an intervention.

Over the past ten years, this perspective has guided the efforts of Foundation-supported educational projects in Israel. The diversity of the Van Leer experience in Israel is rooted in the diversity of Israeli society itself, shaped by the meeting (and at times clash) of cultures, as Jews from the Diaspora emigrated to the country after the establishment of the State. In this process, differences between ethnic groups (North Africans, Yemenites, East Europeans, Indians, Iraqis – and most recently, Ethiopians) have often been exacerbated by yet further differentiation of traditional from modern, secular from orthodox communities. Last, but by no means least, the fact that Israel is a pluralist society with a sizeable Arab minority, distinct from the Jewish majority in language, religion, culture, and national identity, adds yet another facet to this diversity.

The Israeli projects are representative of this diversity. The projects share a common commitment to parent and community-based education, drawing on and developing the community's human resources and strengths in order to meet its children's needs. The strategies and programmes developed by the projects, many of which build on ideas and activities first worked out elsewhere in Israel or in other countries, are described here. There are many strands which are common to all the projects but for me, pride of place is reserved for the indigenous para-professionals – the jewels in the crown – who are the hallmark of the Van Leer community education projects, and who make all the rest possible.

A dominant paradigm of modern Western society attributes societal development to the competitive strivings of individuals for the achievement of wealth, power and status. The 'disadvantaged' parents of tomorrow's 'disadvantaged' children are to a large extent the victims of this paradigm. The strategy of empowerment discussed here offers a different vision, of the habilitation and growth of the individual and of societal change achieved through the shared, cooperative efforts of autonomous and self-reliant communities.

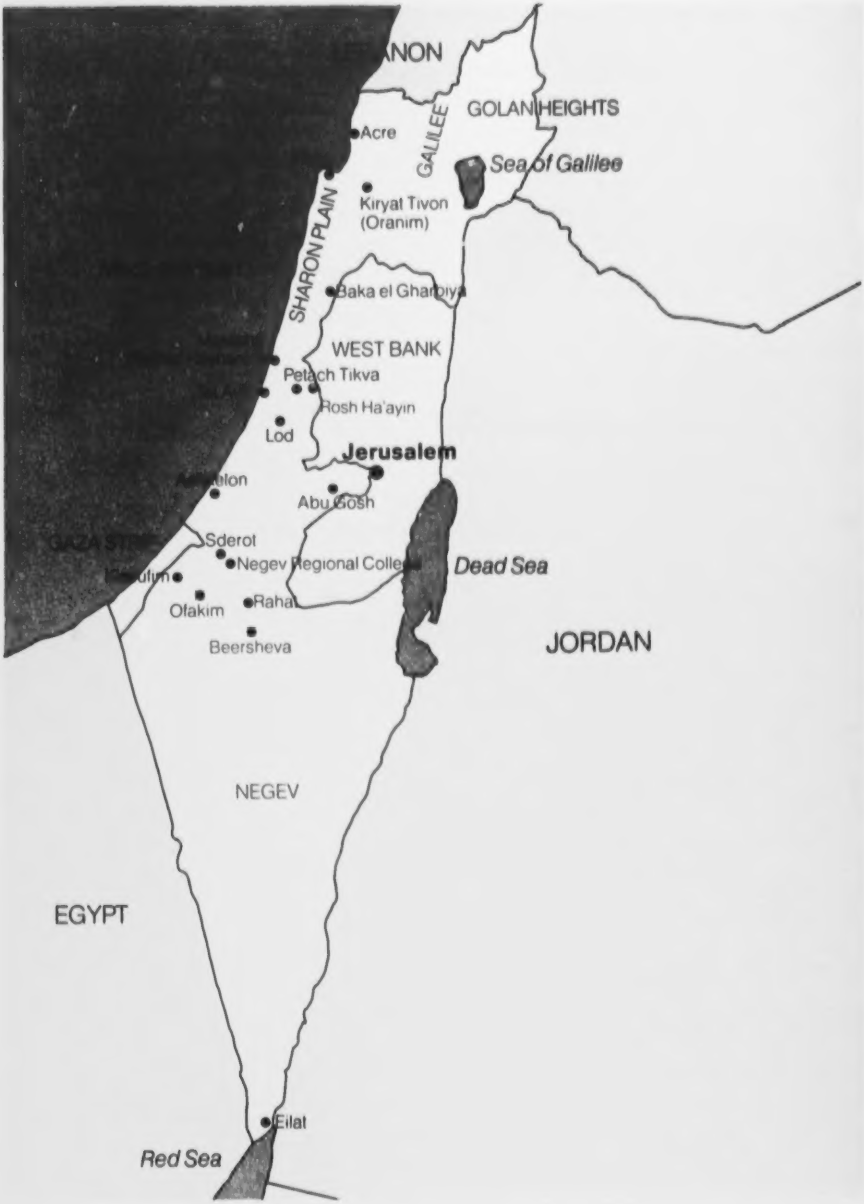
If this book encourages others to move in similar directions, it will have served its purpose.

Ruth Paz
July 1989

Glossary

ashkenazi	(plural: *Ashkenazim*) Originally the term designating the Jews who had settled on the banks of the Rhine in Germany and Northern France in the early Middle Ages; later it acquired a broader connotation, encompassing the Jews of Eastern Europe and their descendants in other countries, and the distinct cultural entity which evolved in these areas. The term is used in clear counterdistinction to *Sephardim* who are Jews tracing their origin to Spain and the culture which developed there.
barrio	(Spanish) District or suburb of large city or town in South America.
Beta Yisrael	('the house of Israel') The name by which the Jews of Ethiopia – an ancient community descended by tradition from the notables of Jerusalem who accompanied Melenik, the son of King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba, on his return to his country – call themselves. Ethiopian Jews were commonly referred to as *falashas*, a term which in Amharic means 'exiles', and which bears negative connotations.
diaspora	(literally: dispersal or scattering) The term used to indicate the voluntary dispersion of the Jewish people (as distinct from the forced dispersion which followed the unsuccessful revolt of the Jews against the Romans and the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 AD). The term refers today to Jewish communities outside the State of Israel.
eda	(plural: *edot*) Literally 'community' or grouping, the term is used to designate Jewish communities coming from one of the countries of the diaspora which developed distinct cultural characteristics differentiating them from other ethnic groupings.
EMRA	An acronym from the two Hebrew words meaning mother and teacher, the EMRA programme is the name given to the home visiting programme developed first in the Ofakim project.
favela	(Portuguese) Shanty town on the fringes of a large city or town in South America.
Headstart	A nationwide compensatory educational programme for pre-school children from 'culturally deprived' homes, developed in the United States in the 1960s.
HIPPY	Home Instruction Programme for Pre-school Youngsters developed by Dr. Avima Lombard of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem.
Histadrut	The General Federation of Labour in Israel.

Jewish Agency	International non-governmental body, based in Jerusalem, which is the executive and representative of the World Zionist Organisation, whose main aims are to assist and encourage Jews throughout the world to help in the development and settlement of Israel. The Zionist Organisation was first recognised in the League of Nations Mandate for Palestine as the public body responsible for all aspects of the establishment of a Jewish National Home in Palestine and as representative of the interests of the Jewish population of that country. Throughout the Mandatory period, until the establishment of the State of Israel, it played the principal role in relations between the *Yishuv* and world Jewry on the one hand, and Mandatory and other powers on the other. With the establishment of the State, it relinquished many of its functions to the newly created government but continued to be responsible for immigration, land settlement, youth work and other activities financed by voluntary Jewish contributions.
kibbutz	(plural: *kibbutzim*) A voluntary collective community based on egalitarian principles in which there is no private wealth and which is responsible for all the needs of its members and their families.
ma'abara	(plural: *ma'abarot*) Transitional immigrants' camps established in the 1950s to house the mass immigration to Israel.
Mandate for Palestine	The Mandate system was established after the First World War by the Treaty of Versailles for the administration of former overseas possessions of Germany and parts of the Ottoman Empire, for the purpose of preparing these countries 'to be able to stand alone'. The Mandate for Palestine differed in that its primary purpose was the establishment of a national home for the Jewish people, in recognition of the historical connection of the Jewish people with Palestine. The Mandate for Palestine was given to Great Britain at San Remo on 25 April 1920 and ratified by the Council of the League of Nations on 24 June 1922.
moshav	(plural: *moshavim*) A small-holders' cooperative village.
NITZAN	A home visiting programme developed in the S'derot project.
Torah	The first five books of the Old Testament of the Bible.
Yishuv	The Jewish community in Palestine before the establishment of the State of Israel.
zionism	The movement, founded in the late nineteenth century, of Jewish national renaissance which had as its goal the return of the Jewish people to the land of Israel and the establishment of a Jewish State.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Dead Sea
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Ofakim
Rahat
Beersheva
JORDAN
NEGEV
EGYPT
Eilat
Red Sea

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

The reader who seeks a map of the paths to empowerment in this book will be disappointed. There are no maps here because such things do not exist.

Empowerment is defined here as an enabling process which enhances people's own abilities and capacities to direct and control their own lives. By its very nature it is unique to the individual or the group. What is to be found here, however, is a guide to some of the processes involved and a description of some of the activities which have been undertaken by community education projects in Israel committed to this approach. All of these projects have early childhood education at their core and all of them base their work on the principles of community development. However, neither the principles or the practices are unique to Israel, nor are they unique to early childhood projects.

The projects described here have all been supported by the Bernard van Leer Foundation which works with organisations throughout the world to improve the life chances of young children living in disadvantaged circumstances.

The term 'disadvantaged' is a relatively new one which has gained acceptance over the last few decades. It holds out a certain aura of hope insofar as it designates a condition or set of circumstances which are perceived as being amenable to change.

Strategies of empowerment

Earlier programmes aimed at 'disadvantaged' children generally focused on the child in isolation from his or her family, community and own environment and were based on the idea of 'compensation' for 'deficits'. However, experience has led many organisations, including the Bernard van Leer Foundation, to understand that the improvement of children's life chances can only be achieved by improvements in their surroundings. To help the child we must help the parents and other adults to alter their life situations. The strategies chosen by the projects described here are those of community development which, carried to their logical conclusion, are strategies of empowerment.

Chapter Two discusses the evolution of this approach, its theoretical roots in the separate disciplines of early childhood education and community development and the interlinking of the two.

The work of the Bernard van Leer Foundation is traced in the following chapter from its early days as a funding agency, to its concentration on compensatory programmes for children and youth, through to its current support (financial and otherwise) for early childhood programmes which are firmly rooted in the communities where they operate. The development of Foundation-supported work in Israel is described, as are the early childhood projects on which this book is based. These projects fall into three sequential groups, or cohorts, and the first two are described in some detail in this chapter.

The following two chapters move from the general to the particular. The first of the Foundation-supported early childhood projects in Israel to be based on the tenets of community development was based in the development town of Ofakim. As the first it was a pathfinder, not necessarily re-inventing the wheel but taking ideas and programmes from elsewhere and adapting them according to the needs and wishes of the community. Many of the ideas tried out there have since been taken up by other Foundation-supported projects and once more adapted according to local realities. The experience of the Ofakim project is examined from two perspectives: in Chapter Four the project is described in the form of a case study; in Chapter Five, discussion centres on the strategies and tactics of intervention for social change and empowerment, abstracted from concrete experience and enjoying the benefit of hindsight.

The central role of indigenous para-professionals

One cannot overestimate the importance of the role in all this of the para-professionals – women from the local community, often with little formal education or training – who are the core of all the projects and without whom they would not exist. They are indeed the 'jewels in the crown'. Not only are they the individuals who forge paths to empowerment for their communities, they empower themselves in the process and are the living evidence and guarantee that our efforts are not in vain. Chapter Six describes in some detail their role, selection, training and status in the community.

We have spoken of the paths to empowerment as a set of processes; but processes lead to specific activities. Many activities have been tried in the community-based early childhood projects in Israel, some of which have proved valuable enough to be taken up and adapted elsewhere. One of the major activities has been home visiting: programmes where parents of young children are visited in their own homes on a regular basis, thus emphasising the crucial importance of the parents' role as their children's first educators. In some cases, these programmes are viewed as an end in themselves, in others they are a means to encourage the parents (most frequently mothers) to join other activities outside the home, either with or without the children. The wide range of home visiting programmes in Foundation-supported projects in Israel is described in Chapter Seven under the general heading of 'the nuts and bolts of intervention', while the following chapter illustrates the variety of programmes which can be organised outside the home in community-based early childhood projects – programmes in clinics, family day care centres, parent run cooperative nurseries, community-based pre-school provision, enrichment and activity centres, and resource and training centres.

Finally, in Chapter Nine we come to the third cohort, of Foundation-supported projects: those which are aimed at dissemination, at spreading the ideas, the philosophy and the practices of early childhood programmes rooted in the communities they serve. We see how the project which was developed in the Old City of Jerusalem is moving out to other Arab communities in Israel; how a project which started in a suburb of Ramat Hasharon has become the basis for the creation of a regional association; how a Community Education Centre is providing training and resources pioneered in Ofakim to communities throughout the Negev and how a national association of community centres – MATNAS – is working together with Foundation-supported projects in a joint dissemination effort.

Understanding the context

If they are to succeed, all early childhood projects must be firmly rooted in the community. Likewise, if one is to understand the way a project operates, one must have an understanding of the community in which it is rooted. Appendix Two describes in some detail the very complex background to the context in which we live and work and examines the links between ethnicity and disadvantage as they find their expression in Israeli society.

Appendix One provides an encapsulated description of the major projects supported by the Bernard van Leer Foundation in Israel in the past and at present.

CHAPTER TWO

Empowerment of the disadvantaged: from compensatory education to community-based education

What do we mean when we speak of empowerment? In what way are the processes of empowerment of importance in the move from compensatory education to community-based education?

When the great sage Hillel was asked by a sceptic to explain the *Torah* while standing on one foot, he replied: 'Do unto others as you would have them do unto you. That is *Torah* – all the rest is commentary'. As succinctly, one may define empowerment as an enabling process enhancing people's capacity and will to direct and control their own lives in accordance with their own needs and aspirations – as each one of us would direct and control his or her own life.

It is this dimension of control and choice that divides the 'advantaged' (for present purposes, the writer of these words and you, the reader) and the 'disadvantaged' and it is this divide we aim to bridge. Defining disadvantage in terms of power and control has profound implications for the manner in which one seeks to overcome its deleterious effects. By definition, empowerment is about working *with* not *for* people; it is participatory and builds on the existing strengths of the individual and the community. It is a process of growth of understanding, skills, knowledge, and self confidence enabling people to manage their own and their children's lives more effectively. It is above all a process of growth into autonomy. The role of the intervener is respectfully to foster and facilitate this process.

It is to the question of how best to bridge the divide, how best to narrow the gap between the advantaged and the disadvantaged, to which we now turn.

Social and cultural disadvantage as a social problem

Disadvantage is a social problem. As Robert K. Merton pointed out, a social problem cannot be said to exist until it is perceived as such. There is a reciprocal relationship between the moral consciousness of a society and its awareness of the existence of social problems, grounded in consciousness of a discrepancy between social standards and social reality. Moreover, for this discrepancy to be defined as a social problem, it must be regarded as corrigible. That which we consider to be an unalterable element of the human condition is an existential, not a social problem. For example, while poverty has undoubtedly been with us

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throughout the history of mankind, it has for most of that time been regarded as an inevitable and unchangeable feature of human existence, much like mortality itself. Indeed, the perception of poverty as a social problem appears to be as historically variable as the moral consciousness which at times appears to reverse the process, converting yesterday's social problem into today's 'inevitable human condition'.[1]

Compensatory education and the disadvantaged child

Present-day perceptions of social and cultural disadvantage as major societal problems, and concomitant widespread awareness and concern for the plight of the disadvantaged child, are closely linked to the growth and development of the concept that society and government is responsible for the welfare of its citizens. In the United States, this concept gained prominence in the New Deal era of the 1930s, gathering further momentum after World War II and finding its clearest expression in the late 1950s and 1960s in the civil rights movement, the War on Poverty and the Economic Opportunity Act. In Europe, these perceptions played a leading role in the period of post-war reconstruction and the development of the welfare state in the late 1940s and early 1950s. Increased concern with issues of inequality focused attention on the link between poverty, school failure and the perpetuation of disadvantage from generation to generation in a vicious circle of poverty, leading in the 1960s to the development of programmes such as the Educational Priority Areas in Britain or the Headstart programme in the United States.

The very choice of the term 'disadvantaged' to describe children of deprived socio-economic background reflects the optimism of the era and its faith in planned progress and development. Disadvantage is a relative term, implying not an unbridgeable dichotomy of 'haves' and 'have-nots', but rather, measurable degrees of inequality, constituting a socio-economic and socio-cultural gap which, in a democracy with egalitarian pretensions, should and can be reduced without challenging the system itself. In modern society, achievement is closely linked to education. Awareness of persistent and significant gaps in scholastic attainment between 'advantaged' and 'disadvantaged' children shattered belief in the 'equality of educational opportunity' as the great equaliser of life chances. Clearly, universal, free and compulsory education was of itself unable to assure fulfillment of the potential inherent in the deprived child; true equality of opportunity demanded unequal treatment of such children within the educational system: 'positive discrimination'. Differential treatment, in the form of more and better educational facilities and programmes for socially and culturally deprived children, was expected to 'compensate' for the 'deficits' in their background which hindered their adjustment to the demands of the school system, whose task it was to prepare them for successful integration into society.

Two books published in the United States in the early 1960s – Hunt's *Intelligence and Experience* and Bloom's *Stability and Change in Human Characteristics* [2] – were particularly influential in drawing attention to the adverse effects of the 'culture of poverty' on development during the child's infant and pre-school years and to the importance of early intervention. The most dramatic of Bloom's findings, (since then widely challenged), to the effect that 'about 50 percent of intellectual development takes place between conception and age four'[3], helped to make the pre-school child the major focus of compensatory education and led to the initiation of the Headstart programme in 1965, as a nationwide effort directed towards decreasing the 'cognitive deficits' of 'culturally deprived' pre-school children, so as to help them to adapt to the demands of the school system.[4]

The degree to which the rest of the world is influenced by developments in the United States – in fad and fashion no less than in technology and science – is at times distressing, especially when imitation follows outmoded vogues or discarded ideas. Compensatory education in formal pre-school settings, stressing cognitive development, was adopted in the ensuing years as *the* model by both developing and developed countries – Israel included – even while many of its assumptions were already being challenged. Less attention seems to have been paid to those pleading for a more balanced perspective. For example, as early as 1966, Catherine S. Chilman, in an overview of research findings regarding characteristic child rearing and family life patterns of the poor published by the US Department of Health, Education and Welfare, pointed out that the 'concept of the family as a basic social unit of society is not to be tossed aside lightly', and pleaded 'to consider the development of the whole child'.[5]

Towards an ecological approach to the needs of the disadvantaged child

By the early 1970s, perception of how best to meet the needs of the disadvantaged child began to change. Academic research provided increasing evidence of the crucial role of parents in early childhood education – for example, Urie Bronfenbrenner's 1974 analysis of the data derived from a number of longitudinal evaluations of pre-school intervention programmes. Bronfenbrenner discussed the implications of these findings in a volume entitled *Is Early Intervention Effective?*[6] His answer to this question was yes – but only if intervention is family, rather than child-centred. Findings from a number of studies of school-based programmes indicated that intellectual gains were limited and short-lived; the most powerful predictors of school performance continued to be the background characteristics of the child's family, thus begging the question of whether the enormous amounts of money and energy directed at changing schools and their curriculum – in fact, the whole approach of compensatory education – might not have been misdirected.

On the other hand, data on home-based intervention indicated significant gains which held up well several years after intervention was concluded. This led Bronfenbrenner to advocate home intervention in the early years of life, focused not on the child but on the mother-child relationship, 'the two-person system which sustains and fosters (the child's) development.'[7] Bronfenbrenner maintained that reciprocal interaction between mother and child involved not only a two-way process but a two-way effect: the mother trained the child, but the child also 'trained' the mother. Since mother and child remained together after intervention ceases, the gains achieved through this kind of intervention strategy were more likely to persist than those attained in group pre-school programmes. Parent intervention apparently functioned as a kind of fixative: 'as if the child himself had no way of internalising the processes which foster his growth, whereas the child-parent system does possess this capacity'.[8]

Bronfenbrenner concluded that the family is the most effective and economical system for fostering and sustaining the development of the child, and that the involvement of the child's family is critical to the success of any intervention programme. Moreover, evidence pointed to the fact that parents participating in programmes for the sake of their children were themselves affected, even in spheres lying outside the parental role. The confidence gained by mothers was reflected in their increasing interest and participation in community affairs and in significant changes in their own lifestyle – changes which point to increased 'environmental mastery'.[9]

However, the conditions of life of disadvantaged families were often such that the family was unable to function effectively in its child rearing role. For those in the most deprived circumstances, the most powerful technique for assuring the child's optimal development was probably, in the first instance, to provide the family with adequate health care, nutrition, housing and employment. But even when these basic prerequisites were assured there still remained an overwhelming need for an environment providing opportunity and support for parental activity. In the last analysis, 'it is the absence *versus* the presence of adequate opportunity and status for parental activity that is the most crucial factor affecting the early development of the disadvantaged child.'[10] Bronfenbrenner proposed a comprehensive and sequenced strategy of ecological and family-centred intervention (beginning with preparation for parenthood when the future parents were themselves still in school) and the provision of support systems for families in four major areas – the world of work, the school, the neighbourhood and the home – and concluded that what was called for was a major reorientation in the design of intervention programmes:

> 'In the past, such programmes were primarily child-centred, age-segregated, time-bound, self-centred, and focused on the trained professional as the powerful and direct agent of intervention with the child. The results of this analysis point to approaches that are family-

> centred rather than child-centred, that cut across contexts rather than being confined to a single setting, that have continuity through time, and that utilise as agents of socialisation the child's own parents, other family members, adults and other children from the neighbourhood in which he lives, school personnel,and other persons who are part of the child's enduring environment.'[11]

Bronfenbrenner's analysis and recommendations had as their frame of reference the circumstances of America's poorest stratum. However, his central thesis – the crucial importance of context and the need to confront the total life-situation of the disadvantaged child – was universal in its import. This has proved to be particularly true in many parts of the developing world, where conditions of multiple deprivation have rendered the exclusively child-centred educational models of the developed world irrelevant.

Community development theory and practice

Community development as a distinct discipline and approach is of relatively recent origin, as is the perception of the problems and needs which it addresses. Its ideological roots date much further back, and are grounded in an intellectual tradition which views community as a source of security and stability, providing the individual with a sense of identity, wholeness and shared values. 'Community' is the antithesis to the alienation and fragmentation of modern mass society. To quote Robert Nisbet, a well-known proponent of this perspective, 'Only communities, small in scale but solid in structure ... respond, at the grass roots, to fundamental human desires: living together, experiencing together, being together.'[12]

The communitarian viewpoint is unequivocally humanistic. It regards man as 'an intrinsically social being, and not socially inclined merely for convenience or self-interest; craving involvement and deriving from such involvement a sense of belonging and a sense of identity.' A similar viewpoint has been voiced by Erich Fromm: 'Our sanity and mental health depend upon the satisfaction of those needs and passions which are specifically human and which stem from the conditions of the human situation: the need for relatedness, transcendence, roots; the need for a sense of identity and the need for a frame of orientation and devotion.'[13]

The parameters of community development: the community as a social system

The communitarian viewpoint has often been charged with romantic longing for the values of an irrevocably lost world, irrelevant to the problems and needs of the present era. Its critics have tended to argue that the loss of community is no loss at all, but rather, the inevitable and desirable accompaniment of modernisation and its concomitant individualistic ethos, freeing men from the shackles of the primary group.

In recent years, this atomised individualistic perspective has in turn been challenged by the holistic perceptions of systems theory. The application of principles of cybernetics and systems theory to the social world has provided the communitarian tradition with scientific underpinnings, and underscored the increasing relevance of the community development approach. As Szymon Chodak points out, community development implies expanding societal 'systemness' – growing interdependence and interaction, and declining self-sufficiency. Societies are constituted of systematic interrelations and interdependencies – without which modern life would be impossible – which increasingly impinge on individuals as members of society. Systems in societies are made of men, but men cannot live beyond systems.[14]

Social systems theory is unequivocally holistic in its outlook; its concern is with the intricate interrelationship of elements, with a *gestalt* rather than with discrete entities treated out of context; it emphasises process and transitions as the basis of flexible and changing structures.[15] Thinking about human problems and needs in systems terms has profound implications for any intervention effort aiming for change. In the first instance, it leads us to focus on the family as an interactive system, rather than on the child in isolation. Next, it leads us to consider the family in interaction with its immediate relevant context, the neighbourhood. Finally, it leads us to consider the community itself and the interconnection and interrelation of its various subsystems and institutions: educational, economic, cultural, political, which together determine the local situation. Applying the insights of social systems theory to the community reveals a number of factors that should be taken into consideration when intervening in communities:

> the individual in the community is at one and the same time a member of a number of community sub-systems, as well as of larger systems outside the community;
>
> human systems (unlike mechanical systems) are open systems with permeable boundaries; a change in one component of the system produces strains and stimulates changes in other components;
>
> any attempt to bring about lasting improvement in any specific problem area in the community must take into consideration the wider socio-economic, cultural and political factors influencing life in the community.

The values and methodology of community development

Community development is a strategy of planned change, a deliberate effort to modify social conditions – not through change imposed from outside, but through processes generated within and by the community. Community development involves a commitment to problem solving and decision making with people instead of for them, 'helping community people to become subjects instead of objects, acting on their community situation instead of simply reacting.'[16]

The most frequently mentioned theme in the literature on community development is 'participation': participation is at once a means to an end and an end in itself. As a strategy, participation means involvement of people in a community in the process of studying and defining their own immediate situation and needs, deciding democratically what to do about them, carrying out their own programmes and hopefully, developing through the process the ability to solve community problems. Participation means self-help, self-management and autonomy: 'What is involved, essentially, is community people making a transition from being objects of the polity, manipulated by the bureaucracy, adapting themselves to it, and so forth, to becoming subjects who consider issues, make decisions, and act responsibly *vis-à-vis* their community.'[17]

Community development as a strategy of social change has been criticised for its emphasis on non-material goals and on change in the individual's motivations, attitudes and aspirations as necessary pre-conditions for meaningful social change. S.K. Khinduka, in an often-quoted critique of community development, calls it 'a gentleman's approach to the world' – a humanistic and humanising method, whose promise and potential, in an age when much of what we call 'progress' conceals widespread alienation, apathy, antagonism, cynicism and impersonal bureaucratisation, is most self-evident – but whose relative neglect of such equally humanising principles as equality, justice, and material well-being are apt to create an uncomfortable gap between its intent and its effect. 'Community development will do practically everything to improve the psychological lives of the poor; it will create among them a sense of self-respect and confidence, of civic pride and identification with their locality ... but will not usually question the economic system which permits the coexistence of poverty and plenty'.[18] Yet the most revolutionary of all social concepts – for the poor no less than for any other sector of society – is the belief that people can indeed shape their own lives: that they can, as it were, write their own history. That possibility is clearly enhanced by what has come to be known as 'community development'.

Almost by definition community development is the strategy of choice of those who would promote empowerment. When brought to bear on the needs and problems of the disadvantaged child and linked with progressive pedagogy – itself a vehicle of empowerment – a potent force for positive change and impact on the life chances of children, their parents and the communities in which they live is unleashed.

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CHAPTER THREE

The Bernard van Leer Foundation in Israel

The Bernard van Leer Foundation was originally a general philanthropic institution. In 1966, under the influence of the Headstart programme in the United States, it decided to concentrate its efforts on the development of 'compensatory education of culturally and socially disadvantaged children, to enable them to fulfil their potential'. The first Foundation-supported project in this field, initiated to develop and support a network of 'Basic Schools' for 3 to 6 year olds in Jamaica, was typical of the era in its emphasis on compensatory education, enriched curriculum and teacher training. Similarly, a number of Foundation-supported projects at this time were university-based and research-oriented, concerned with the design of special curricula and the development of models of enriched formal pre-school education, aimed at facilitating the entry of the disadvantaged child into the regular elementary school system.

The Foundation's style of operation fosters innovation and experimentation. Maintaining a close relationship with its projects, the Foundation is supportive without being unduly directive, involved, yet not domineering; it demands accountability, yet is willing to take risks; it is prepared to accept failure alongside success. By treating its projects as a network and encouraging the interchange of experience, it has facilitated dissemination of innovations among an extraordinary variety of settings throughout the world. The theoretical knowledge and practical expertise derived from wide and varied field experience has, in turn, enabled the Foundation to influence educational policy in different parts of the world.

Changing perspectives

The Foundation's approach to the central issue of how best to meet the needs of the disadvantaged child has evolved over the last two decades. What is particularly striking, although perhaps not surprising, is the fact that the initial impetus towards change often comes from the periphery and not from the centre. It is the projects in the field who are often most keenly aware of the shortcomings of accepted strategies and practices and who are the first to move in new directions, which only at later stages come to be widely accepted.

The Jerusalem Seminar

The international seminar on 'Curriculum In Compensatory Early Childhood Education', organised by the Bernard van Leer Foundation in Jerusalem in 1972, reflected a move forward. Israel's experience in the education and assimilation of immigrants from different cultural milieus made it a suitable venue. Most of the Israelis who took part came from the academic world and from the educational establishment.

The seminar attempted to examine the concept of social and cultural disadvantage in general, and the viability of the idea of compensatory education in cross-cultural and global terms. The seminar was also concerned with the design of cognitive oriented curricula and their implementation: classroom management, teacher training, and so on. Pre-school was viewed as the vehicle for furthering and accelerating adaptation to the dominant culture – even if this involved 'a conscious acceptance of a discontinuity between the atmosphere of the home and the school'.[1]

This perspective was challenged head on by the then recently established Athlone Early Learning Centre in South Africa. Compensatory education was accused of 'blaming the victim' – with fostering the one-sided view that poverty and disadvantage lie with the disadvantaged child and his family, rather than with the broader social and political factors. The 'deficit model', on which compensatory education rests, was charged with ethnocentricity and with focusing on weaknesses in certain sub-cultures while ignoring their strengths. The Athlone team, quoting Basil Bernstein to the effect that 'we should stop thinking in terms of "compensatory education", and instead, most seriously and systematically consider the conditions and contexts of the educational environment', demanded that the family and community should be worked with and not compensated for.[2]

One of the important conclusions reached was that parent and community involvement were vital to effective early childhood education, and thus 'highly apposite to the question of curriculum'. A number of themes, which were to become the central focus of Foundation-supported projects in Israel, were originally discussed at this seminar – such as the role of para-professionals and the integration of educational programmes for the disadvantaged with the widest possible range of other community services.[3]

The 1970s: from education of parents to parents as educators

By the early 1970s, growing awareness of the gap between the child's in-school and out-of-school life, the limited efficacy of schools as vehicles for the remediation of 'deficits', and the ineffectiveness of intervention efforts directed at the child in isolation from his family and social context could no longer be ignored. This led to increasing efforts to develop programmes bridging home and school and involving parents and community members as active partners in the education of their children. Formal educational contexts were subjected to a process of reorganisation and reorientation so as to adapt them to meet community needs; new roles were defined for parents as para-professional aides; school-home-community links were forged and community-based curricula developed. Recognition of the importance of the first years of life focused attention on the prevention of 'deficits', through parent education and enrichment of the home environment; projects began to design 'curricula' for infant stimulation and to train mothers as para-professional home visitors.

Parents ceased to be regarded as assistants able to perform only limited ancillary tasks, but rather as people able to acquire the skills and knowledge needed to guide others. It was discovered that even those whose prior education was minimal were able to perform competently tasks previously regarded as the exclusive preserve of the 'professional'. The trained parent working as a para-professional began to play a central role in Foundation-supported projects. The shift in focus from the education of parents to parents as educators marks a critical turning-point in Foundation thinking and the beginnings of a distinct 'Van Leer approach', finding expression in community-based, informal early childhood education programmes, sensitive to the individuality of the culture in which they were located, and contributing as much to the development of parent and community as to that of the child himself. With early childhood education as the initial point of access and the child as the focus of intervention, these projects often became vehicles of community education and development, providing counselling and support for parents, facilitating the continuing adult education and employment training for youth, and promoting the growth of local community leadership – with one form of educational intervention reinforcing the other.

A shared philosophy of community self-help and self-reliance became the distinctive hallmark of Van Leer projects throughout the world. The editorial of the Spring 1981 *Newsletter* spoke of a central theme running through all Foundation projects – a concern with the strategies and tactics 'by which the incompetence wrought by poverty can be displaced by the confidence and competence necessary if people are autonomously to shape their own destiny.'

The 1980s: integrated early childhood education and community development, the emergence of a unique 'Van Leer' approach

The evolutionary process described above reached its culmination in the policy guidelines adopted by the Bernard van Leer Foundation's Board of Trustees at the beginning of the 1980s. Designating the pre-school child and his needs as the key focus, and his optimal development as the central aim of intervention, the programme for the 1980s defined the strategy and tactics by means of which this aim was to be realised. Reflected was the cumulative experience of over 15 years of intervention aimed at improving the life-chances of children in a broad variety of contexts worldwide. The programme was an unequivocal statement of what could by now be designated as a distinct 'Van Leer' approach – as much credo as methodology – and incorporated a number of principles.

> The Foundation's approach to the needs of the young child is preventive rather than curative.
>
> Development is a holistic process, incorporating affective, social, and cultural, no less than explicitly cognitive factors.
>
> It is necessary to address all the factors influencing the course of the child's life, broadening the concept of education to include areas such as nutrition, hygiene, and health, in order to provide him with the optimal conditions for development.
>
> The needs of the child must be viewed in context and cannot be divorced from those of the family and the broader social and material environment of the community.
>
> The concept of 'family' must be broadly defined so as to incorporate a wide range of possibilities, from the single teenage parent to the traditional extended family. The definition of 'parent' needs to be expanded to include parental surrogates such as older siblings, grandparents and caregivers.
>
> In order to foster the child's optimal development, it is necessary to forge the concentric circles of family, peer group, educational frameworks, neighbourhood and community surrounding him into an interactive and mutually supportive network able to provide him with the security of a coherent educational ecology.
>
> Fostering the development of family and community means working with people rather than for them, replacing dependence with autonomy and self-reliance in a process of increasing habilitation. This implies a deliberate, conscious and sustained effort to develop and build on the human resources of the community, through the training of local people and the encouragement of their active participation. In Foundation-supported interventions, the trained indigenous worker from the community, the so-called para-professional, is the catalyst in this process of empowerment.
>
> Active participation, involvement and assumption of responsibility can counteract the apathy, hopelessness and negative self-concept typical of many deprived communities, contribute to the building of a positive self-image and help to unleash energies which can be channelled into

community development. Early childhood education can thus become a vehicle for children's development and adult self-expression, as well as a powerful force for the growth of community autonomy.

Integration and coordination of a variety of educational inputs has more force and impact than isolated and compartmentalised educational programmes, as well as being mutually enriching and conserving scarce resources. Therefore, educational projects should strive to incorporate and influence the widest possible range of available institutional and human resources in the community.

Given the variability of people and of the conditions under which they live, the strategy delineated above is by definition flexible, lending itself to different forms of implementation and encouraging innovation, as each community evolves its unique answers to its self-defined priorities and needs. It offers neither recipes nor nostrums in the form of pre-planned programmes. The only constant in this approach is more in the nature of an article of faith than a tactic: a belief in the right of individuals and communities to self-determination and autonomy, and in their capacity for self-generated growth and development.

In the harsher economic climate of the 1980s, marked by shrinking material resources and drastically reduced government spending, community self-help and self-reliance are often the only reliable strategy. Under these changed circumstances, the low-cost, non-formal programmes pioneered by Foundation projects in the 1970s, drawing on local resources to meet the needs of child, family and community, continue to demonstrate their efficacy in developmental-educational terms, while making good sense in economic terms.

Integration of disciplines

The 'uniqueness' of the 'Van Leer approach' to the education of the disadvantaged child, what sets it apart from more conventional strategies, is its successful integration of the perspectives of two disciplines – progressive early childhood education on the one hand, and community development on the other – to their mutual enrichment. The improvement of its children's education and welfare has often proved to be an effective focal point around which a disadvantaged community can be mobilised and drawn out of its apathy, while at the same time, assumption of responsibility and active involvement in their children's education contributes dramatically to parents' self-esteem and confidence, and stimulates their increased participation in community affairs. In brief, the application of concepts derived from community development to early childhood education engender a potent strategy of empowerment.

Perhaps because of the fact that the specific target of Foundation-supported intervention has consistently been the disadvantaged child, with parents and the community cast in ancillary roles as agents of socialisation, care and education, the ideological and methodological influence of community development has rarely received adequate recognition.

Concentric circles of empowerment

Empowerment is a process of facilitating and enabling people to acquire skills, knowledge and confidence to make responsible choices and to carry them out; it is about helping to create settings which facilitate autonomous functioning. In order to overcome disadvantage and assure children of optimal conditions for their development and growth, the process of empowerment must encompass the child, the parent and the community.

Although the main target of intervention is the child, it has been amply demonstrated that efforts directed at the child alone are of limited efficacy. Only by creating an environment, an ecology which fosters the overall development of the child – emotional, social, physical and cognitive – can one hope to affect his or her life-chances in a positive manner. Early childhood programmes must be holistic and ecological in their approach, involving the child, the parents and the community in concentric circles of belonging and support, reinforcing and gaining sustenance from each other. Parents lacking in self-esteem and self-confidence, passive and resigned to their fate, can neither foster a positive self-image in their children nor provide them with adequate support, encouragement and opportunities for growth. Without the empowerment of the community; without the evolution of self-help, self-reliance and self-activation; without the development of human resources in and of the community; without the encouragement and support of local initiatives; indeed, without the community's assumption of responsibility for and control of its own functioning, the success of the best early childhood programme will at best be partial.

Empowering parents

Formal educational provision cannot compensate for an impoverished home environment, nor offset the effects of inadequate parental care and support. The first task of any programme aimed at fostering the optimal development of the young child is the *prevention* of disadvantage – the sundering of the vicious circle through which the heritage of disadvantage is passed from generation to generation. In the first instance, this calls for intervention at the point of primary socialisation – the home – during the formative early years, when the parent is directly responsible for the care and education of the child, and for the strengthening of parents' capacity to attend effectively to the needs of their children: emotional, intellectual and physical. Basic to the child's early development is the *quality* of parent-child interaction and the degree to which parents feel adequate to the task and secure in their own self-image and sense of self-worth. By providing parents with the opportunity to acquire knowledge, to develop skills and to deepen their understanding of the child's developmental needs, their self-confidence and self-esteem are enhanced, as is their capacity to establish a warm and supportive relationship with their children. Parents should be attuned and responsive to their children's needs and enjoy the experience of parenthood. The empowerment of parents means restoring to parents their role as the first and foremost educators of their children.

Investment in the self-development of parents is the most cost-effective, long-term investment that can be made by any intervention effort. Strengthening of parents in their role as the child's primary socialising agents reaffirms and strengthens the family as the primary support structure and meaningful context for both child and adult. The family is possibly the only structure able to provide the sense of belonging, continuity and reciprocity on which the psychological well-being of the individual depends to a high degree. (It should however be emphasised that 'parent' and 'family' are culturally variable concepts: the category of 'parent' may include a variety of parent-surrogates; families may be extended, nuclear, single parent, and so on.)

As the child's self-esteem needs positive parental role-models in order to flourish, so parental self-esteem and self-reliance flourish best in an atmosphere of mutual aid and support. Parents, especially young mothers, are often socially isolated, with no one with whom to share the burdens and crises of daily life and no-one to turn to for the emotional and practical support which the extended family and traditional community structures once provided. Coping with the demands of caring for young children, especially under conditions of deprivation, often strains the capacity of parents to breaking-point. The opportunity to share problems with others in similar situations provides an antidote to helplessness and despair. Parent groups, for example, can be effective support structures and are also an ideal learning environment. Group learning in an atmosphere of equality and mutual respect permits parents to contribute their own knowledge and experience and learn from that of others, in a two-way process which encourages sharing, provides mutual support and helps to overcome habits of passivity. Within the non-judgmental atmosphere of the parental peer group, parents are able to voice their doubts and fears, learn new ways of coping and enhance their understanding of their children and themselves. They acquire new self-confidence and self-respect and gain assurance of their abilities to meet the needs of their children.

Better parenting is not the only purpose served by parent groups. Empowerment of parents means the empowerment of individuals, only one of whose roles is parenting. The disadvantaged parent, no less than the disadvantaged child, is in need of encouragement and opportunities for personal growth and realisation of potentials. The parents' group can be the training ground for self-directed functioning in the wider social context. The neighbourhood-based parents' group, fostering social competence, mutual aid, and self-help, thus becomes one of the primary building-blocks of community organisation and development. This is the significance of the link between early childhood education and community development stressed in the Van Leer approach. Parent and community-based early childhood education becomes a lever for community development.

Empowering the community: developing parent and community-based early childhood education programmes

Knowledge is power, and education – of the child, the parent, the community – a process of empowerment. The task of education is to provide meaningful and relevant learning opportunities, fostering growth and the realisation of the capacities inherent in people. Empowerment can only begin from people themselves, from the point where they are at, from their perceived needs and their strengths. Nonetheless, the process of empowerment often depends on the initial presence of a catalyst, an external change agent who stimulates and facilitates the process of transition from dependence and external control to self-determination and autonomy. But the ultimate success of any such external intervention depends on the establishment of a partnership with parents and the community from the beginning. Programmes must begin from the needs of the community as it perceives and defines them, and must be congruent with its culture and life-style. They must also be based on a realistic assessment of local potentials and resources if they are to achieve their aim of enhancing self-functioning and autonomy. Successful intervention begins with listening to people and respecting their knowledge, experience, and understanding their own situation and needs, and not with the imposition of pre-determined models, no matter how successful these may have been elsewhere. Intervention begins with the active involvement of the community in the identification of problems and the definition of solutions.

Programme implementation: the role of indigenous community promoters

The ultimate purpose is to strengthen parents' capacity to foster the optimal development of the child. Communities are untapped reservoirs of human potential. The indigenous community promoter – the locally trained para-professional, recruited from the community, is not only an effective educator of small children and their parents and a successful community organiser; he (more often, she) acts as a role-model for other parents, a demonstration that helplessness, apathy and dependence can be overcome. The local community promoter is the flag-bearer of change and development in the community. The first task of any community-based educational programme is to locate potential community promoters and to provide them with the broad range of skills and knowledge required for effective promotion of the welfare of the community's children and parents, as well as assuring them of continuous opportunities to further expand their skills and know-how. The soundest investment of any community development initiative is the investment in people – in the fostering of local leadership potential.

Parents, schools and communities must coordinate their efforts to promote the welfare of the child. Only too often, scarce resources are wasted in struggles for power and control. Such community-based programmes should act as a catalyst by bringing together all the elements in the community concerned with the child's well-being, so as to create a comprehensive community network mobilised to effectively meet the needs of families and children.

The needs of parents and children in different life-situations (working mothers and fathers, housewives, single-parent families) must be met. Families' capacities should be strengthened to foster the healthy development of their children. The best resource that programmes can draw on in this effort are parents themselves.

The 'Israeli connection'

Israel's brief history demonstrates the efficacy as well as the relevance of self-reliant, autonomous communities and self-managed institutions to development. The *kibbutz* and the *moshav* – the communal village and the smallholders' cooperative settlement – as well as the worker-owned enterprises, cooperatives and mutual-aid organisations of the *Histadrut*, the General Federation of Labour, played a crucial role in the struggle for national independence and in the process of nation-building. Moreover they bear witness to the non-utopian character of the communitarian vision. In a country of immigrants and of new communities created from scratch – more often than not by the immigrants themselves in an accelerated process of absorption and integration – 'community building' has been the experience of the 'reluctant pioneer' no less than of the idealist. The perceptions of many of the individuals who have played central roles in the shaping of the Israeli projects were shaped in that experience of 'community building' and its successes and failures. It is thus not surprising that Israel has been a key venue in the evolution of the educational strategy described here.

The early years of involvement in Israel

The Bernard van Leer Foundation's initial involvement in Israel from the 1960s was as a funding agency, supporting private, governmental and university-based research and intervention efforts. NETA, the Secondary School Fostering Project headed by Prof. Moshe Smilansky of Tel Aviv University, which aimed to promote the intellectual development of youth from disadvantaged backgrounds is a good example, as is Prof. Minkovich's national evaluation study of Israeli elementary schools and their impact on the disadvantaged child.

The International Seminar on Curriculum in Compensatory Early Childhood Education, held in Jerusalem in 1972, had a profound effect on the nature of future Foundation-supported projects in Israel as noted earlier.

The Foundation supported the establishment in 1975 of the Centre for the Study of Children's Activities in Oranim, the School of Education of the *kibbutz* movement. The aim of the Centre was to observe and analyse the creative activities of young children. The notion was that the laws governing and influencing these activities could be detected and the understanding and knowledge gained applied to the training and retraining of kindergarten teachers. Gideon Levin, the Director of the Centre, sought, in effect, to establish the existence of a universal, (cross-cultural) grammar of children's activities.

It is not accidental that the Centre for the Study of Children's Activities came to be established at Oranim, the *Kibbutz* School of Education responsible for the training of educational personnel for the *kibbutz* movement. The Centre's educational approach reflects the humanist and communitarian world-view of the *kibbutz* movement. The pedagogy reflects the practical experience of several decades of progressive communal early childhood education. Central to this educational approach is the emphasis on and encouragement of free-flowing, spontaneous activity by the child. All activity is considered to be of equal value, and therefore the activity choice of the children was not limited. The child is free to act in any area of activity in the kindergarten: only limitations of space, a queue of other children or a lack of game partners can curtail involvement in a particular activity. The active kindergarten environment, encouraging learning through self-initiated activity and discovery, rather than the 'teaching' of curricula by the kindergarten teacher, is seen as the best way preparing the child for school and later life, by advancing his or her curiosity, initiative, interest and independence.

From 1977: integrated community education initiatives

Despite differences of circumstance and conditions, the community-based educational projects initiated and sponsored by the Bernard van Leer Foundation in Israel since 1977 share a broad common ground of theory and practice. Each of the projects has sought to strengthen family and community bonds in order to weave a network supporting the development of the disadvantaged child. Projects have often moved in similar directions, developing similar programmes to respond to similar needs and sharing and benefiting from each other's experience. At the same time, implementation of a common strategy, rather than a common model, has resulted in innovative variations on a theme. A systematic review of the Israeli projects clearly reveals how these two themes, similarity and diversity, repeatedly assert themselves.

There are three distinct stages, or cohorts. The first consists of the two projects initiated in the late 1970s in Ofakim and in the Old City of Jerusalem. These represent the stage of initial innovation and experimentation, of formulation of the basic strategy and philosophy, and of development of a variety of prototypes.

The second cohort of projects sees the extension of the approach to communities structurally different, but inhabited by a demographically similar target populations. In the Merchavim, S'derot, and Morasha projects, a number of the programmes developed in Ofakim, such as the EMRA home intervention programme or the neighbourhood activity and the enrichment centres, were adapted and developed further. Each of these projects also developed its own additions to the repertoire, such as family-based day care in Morasha or joint parent-child learning and creative activity in S'derot.

Two projects, each a response to special and complex circumstances, do not fit neatly into this scheme: the *Community and Educational Project for Beta Yisrael*, seeking to further the integration of Ethiopian Jewish immigrants into the mainstream of Israeli society, and the *Early Childhood Care and Education in an Integrated Jewish/Arab Community* project in the mixed town of Acre, which was propelled by the perhaps utopian belief in the bridge-building power of education. Both projects drew on earlier work while continuing the move towards the development of activities uniquely fitted to their own reality.

The third cohort of projects, described and discussed in Chapter 9, are the outcome of the thrust towards dissemination and the search for wider impact, especially at policy level.

Ofakim: integrated education and community development

The Ofakim project, begun in 1977, is described in some detail in the next chapter. It is, however, worth noting here that the integrated approach to early childhood education and community development which was pioneered in Ofakim became the dominant paradigm of Foundation-supported interventions in Israel, the common frame of reference within which each of the projects developed its own unique contribution.

East Jerusalem: early childhood education and community education in the Old City

The East Jerusalem project applied this approach in very different circumstances. The Moslem Quarter of the Old City is an underprivileged area in which over-crowding, congestion and the lack of modern conveniences in the centuries-old houses combine with high unemployment and recurrent political tensions to create particularly difficult conditions of life for the population.

A survey undertaken in 1979 to ascertain the needs of the residents of the Quarter revealed the virtual absence of educational facilities for pre-school children and their parents. The strategy adopted by the project was to work with the community through its children. It began modestly with a day care centre with two pre-school classes for three to five year olds and an open invitation to mothers to spend a morning at the Centre to become better acquainted with their children's activities. The project then developed a comprehensive network of inter-locking activities and services geared to the needs of all members of the family, from the infant and its mother to the elderly grandparent. The concept of 'parent' was expanded to include older sisters, for whom a special programme of family education and general enrichment was devised in recognition of their child care role. Mothers of children in the pre-schools were trained as para-professional educators and assumed responsibility for a neighbourhood outreach programme aimed especially at those mothers who were hesitant to associate themselves with centre-based activities. Fathers too overcame their initial reluctance, and began to take an active interest in their children's education – a radical departure from the norm in this community.

The Centre, a complex of buildings that forms part of the Spafford playground adjacent to the Old City wall, became the hub of community life, open at all hours of the day for all members of the family. Through its early childhood resource and guidance centre, with specially developed didactic materials in Arabic, its toy-making workshop, and its lending library of toys and books, the project has exerted influence on early childhood education in the Arab community reaching beyond its own confines and those of its 'daughter' dissemination project.

Merchavim: education and community development

The Merchavim project was established in 1981 as a satellite of the Ofakim project, an attempt to transpose Ofakim principles into the context of the *moshavim*, the rural smallholders cooperative villages. In partnership with the Merchavim Regional Council, it became an independent Foundation-supported project two years later. A major aim of the original satellite project was to test the dissemination potential of the various programmes developed in Ofakim in a social setting very different in structure but similar in demography. Trial and error revealed that indeed, needs and priorities differ, and not every type of programme is equally effective everywhere.

The 15 *moshavim* of the Merchavim Region were established during the 1950s, the era of mass immigration and population dispersal, at the time of the settlement and development of the northern Negev. (Ofakim was established during the same period as an urban centre intended to provide these agricultural settlements with services). Each *moshav* consists of some 60 to 100 family homesteads and constitutes a distinct communal entity. Municipal services, such as education, health, and sanitation are provided by the Regional Council, the elected local government of this rural area. The population is a cross-section of immigrants from the Islamic world - Moroccans, Tunisians, Kurds, Yemenites, Egyptian Karaites. Demographically, the population shares most of the characteristics of the neighbouring development towns – as well as many of their problems. The small size of the moshavim and their geographic and social isolation are often the cause of additional problems such as factionalism and tense interpersonal relations. Economic insecurity and the extended crisis in agriculture add to the tensions.

The project established afternoon activity and enrichment centres for three to eight year olds in eight *moshavim*. These were the only organised activity for these children after school hours. Each centre is staffed by two para-professional educators from the community, trained by the project, who work under the supervision of a professional early childhood educator, herself a moshav member, who is also the project director. The centres' mode of operation stresses free-flowing, self-directed activity. Working in mixed age groups (something that comes naturally in these small communities where the total number of children under the age of eight may be no more than 40) fosters cooperation and responsibility by the older children for the younger. Project counsellors also staff the developmental guidance corners established by the project in the two regional Well-baby Clinics, and provide counselling and advice for mothers of infants and toddlers who visit the clinic. Special events, such as holiday celebrations and outings, periodically bring parents and children together in joint activities. In the still largely traditional *moshavim* where women have little say in community affairs, the project-trained para-professionals stand out as the exception to the rule. They have made their influence felt beyond the project itself through their active efforts to improve the quality of life in their communities, particularly in cultural and educational affairs.

S'derot: education and development in an industrial community

S'derot is yet another development town of the 1950s, similar to Ofakim in its demographic composition and, until recently, sharing most of its problems. Unlike Ofakim, S'derot, under the direction of a group of dedicated young people from the town and led by a dynamic mayor from among their ranks, made major steps forward and assumed responsibility for its own development. In this process, the *Education and Development in an Industrial Community* project has played an important role.

Reference to the 'industrial community' in the project's name indicates its original target population: the 40 per cent of the S'derot work force employed in the Sha'ar Hanegev Enterprises, a complex of industries processing and marketing agricultural produce and providing services, such as car repairs, for the *kibbutzim* of the Sha'ar Hanegev region who jointly own them. The project focused originally on meeting the educational needs of these workers and their families. Day care was a major component in the early days.

Programmes also directly focused on adult educational needs and included the training of a project steering committee, drawn from the ranks of the workers, in such skills as decision making, setting priorities and planning programmes. This steering committee was instrumental in the creation of a School for Workers in the nearby Regional College, which provided courses ranging from basic literacy to management skills training. At the same time, the project sought to deepen the involvement of parents in the care and education of their children in a variety of ways: through a home visiting programme for mothers of children aged zero to three, encouraging parent-child interaction through the establishment of a Learning Club for children of school age and their parents, and through counselling for parents.

The S'derot project team – professionals as well as para-professionals – consists of local people who see themselves as working for the development of their own community, and enjoy its trust and acceptance. The project has tried to escape from the stigma attached to the label of 'disadvantage', by working with the community to develop educational alternatives without rejecting their own community's culture and way of life. In this process, the project's para-professional counsellors have played a central role.

With the beginning of the second phase of the project in 1985, the project switched to serve the S'derot community as a whole, and expanded its early childhood programmes to meet new needs. The NITZAN home intervention programme for parents of children aged zero to three was extended to include a follow-up programme of workshops for parents and their three to four year olds. A Resource Centre providing books, toy-making materials, guidance and counselling was set up. A parent-run nursery, a stimulation corner in the Well-baby clinic, and a parent-run creativity centre at one of the local schools further reinforced links between the project and parents.

The project has now entered its third, dissemination phase, and has begun to work with the Indian community in the town of Kiryat Gat. Again it is training local women as para-professional educators and introducing community-based early childhood programmes as an alternative to the prevalent service delivery approach. Emphasis is placed on the development of self-supporting and self-sufficient programmes, such as parent-run nurseries.

Morasha: early childhood and family development

Morasha, a neighbourhood 'on the wrong side of the tracks' of Ramat Hasharon, one of Tel Aviv's most prosperous suburbs, was created in the 1950s to rehouse immigrants of North African and Middle Eastern origins living in a nearby transit camp. Morasha meets most of the criteria defining disadvantaged communities: low educational levels, overcrowded housing, alienation and delinquency among its young people, and a high proportion of multi-problem families. Proximity to the affluent neighbourhoods of Ramat Hasharon invites constant comparison and exacerbates feelings of neglect – as do the integrated schools, none of which are located in Morasha. Although Morasha's population of 10,000 includes over 1,000 children under the age of five, before the project came into being, early childhood provision was limited to two day care centres for the children of working mothers. Despite a history of low school achievement and high truancy and delinquency rates, no provision existed to provide parents of pre-school children with guidance or support.

A group of community activists, who had joined together to exert pressure on the local political establishment to improve conditions in Morasha, succeeded in including Morasha in Project Renewal, the joint government-Jewish Agency programme of urban rehabilitation. The similarity of Project Renewal's strategy of encouraging grassroots organisation facilitated the establishment of a joint project with the Foundation. The *Early Childhood and Family Development* project in Morasha, which began in 1982, aimed to provide for the needs of children from birth to six years and their families on a community self-help basis.

Para-professional early childhood workers have played a crucial role in stimulating active participation of parents in the education of their young children and in developing educational activities suited to the particular needs of this community. The EMRA home visiting programme (EMRA is an acronym from the Hebrew words 'mother-teacher'), developed originally in Ofakim, has been adapted to local conditions and provides guidance to parents of children from birth to four years. Home visits centre on parenting and family life as well as on guidance to parents in how to stimulate their child's development through play. Family day care centres run by para-professionals in their own homes care for children of working mothers aged six months to three years. The project, working hand-in-hand with parents, has established a number of other frameworks for the young children of working parents, such as pre-schools for three to four year old 'graduates' of the family day care centres and parent-run day care centres. A variety of additional programmes provide parents with training, guidance, and peer-group support: courses in parenting, toy-making workshops, lectures and discussion groups, and a stimulation and activity centre at the local health clinic.

The Jewish community of Ethiopia – the *Beta Yisrael* – is an ancient community, whose origins, according to legend, date back to the union of King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba. Although cut off from the mainstream of Judaism for two thousand years, the *Beta Yisrael* adhered tenaciously to their religion and traditions, despite periodic persecutions and forced conversions. In recent years, they were caught in the crossfire of internal political conflicts in Ethiopia, as well as being affected by the severe drought and famine in the country. The exodus of Ethiopian Jews began in the late 1970s; however, the majority of the approximately 15,000 *Beta Yisrael* now residing in Israel were brought to the country in the mid-1980s in a dramatic rescue operation. The route to the 'promised land' was accompanied by trials and tribulations, including the death of many family members on the way. The overwhelming majority of the new immigrants arrived destitute, suffering from malnutrition and ill health.

Adjustment, difficult for every immigrant group, has been especially traumatic for the *Beta Yisrael*, because of the sharp contrast between the culture and way of life they experienced in Ethiopia and that of Israeli society. Most of the *Beta Yisrael* came from small villages in remote rural areas where, since they were generally not permitted to own land, they had been primarily craftsmen and small traders. More than 50 per cent of the men, and practically all of the women, were illiterate. Upon arrival in Israel the new immigrants were placed in absorption centres, provided with apartments, furniture, clothing and means of sustenance; were taught Hebrew, literacy, numeracy and other survival skills; and were given vocational training while their children were absorbed into the educational system, from infant creche to high school.

The *Beta Yisrael*, anxious to assimilate quickly into the life of the country, took readily to this crash course in adaptation to modern society, but not without negative side-effects. The traditional patriarchal authority of the community elders and religious leaders became attenuated, as did parental authority. The children often became adept in the ways of the new society before their parents. The long waits in the absorption centres, where decisions were made for the immigrants by representatives of the establishment, which also provided for all their physical needs, fostered profound dependence and passivity. This gave rise to severe problems when the families eventually moved out into the larger community and were left to cope on their own.

The project *Childcare, Family and Community Education for Ethiopian Immigrants*, based in Beersheva, the capital of the Negev, began operations at the beginning of 1985. The central goal of the project was to foster the healthy development and integration of Ethiopian children and their families, and to enhance the family's capacity for self-reliance while building on, rather than subverting, the culture of the *Beta Yisrael*. Given the extended family structure of this traditional community, the project sought to foster parenting skills among all the caregivers: parents, grandparents, and older siblings.

Working out of two multi-purpose neighbourhood centres in areas of Beersheva with large concentrations of Ethiopian immigrants, the project evolved a diversified programme of educational activities for parents, children and other members of the community, combining some elements familiar from other projects with other components designed or adapted to meet the special needs of the *Beta Yisrael*.

Once again, the pride of the project is the team of para-professional early childhood educators trained by the project who are increasingly responsible for the daily running of the various activities. Mornings are given over to work with infants and toddlers aged up to three years and their parents: cooperative nursery schools which parents take turns helping to run; Hebrew, sewing and nutrition classes and a course in parenting, with baby-sitting services provided for participants; a play and guidance corner in the Well-baby Clinic frequented by Ethiopian mothers and their babies and a home visiting programme in which para-professionals provide guidance and support for young (often very young) mothers. In the afternoons, children aged three to eight take part in an enrichment programme which combines free activities encouraging initiative, creativity and self-expression with more structured learning, including help with homework. Yet other programmes, such as lectures on citizen's rights, a health education programme, and outreach work by Ethiopian community workers are aimed at the *Beta Yisrael* community in general.

Acre: the Jewish-Arab community and education project

Acre, a coastal city in the northern part of Israel, has a mixed Jewish and Arab population although residential areas are usually distinctly Arab or Jewish. The Wolfson neighbourhood, the site of the Foundation-supported project initiated in 1986, is the exception to the rule. Wolfson is a residentially integrated neighbourhood, the result of a (forgotten) experiment in coexistence undertaken at the beginning of the 1970s, when the collapse of a building in the old city forced the relocation of a number of families. Little thought or effort were devoted to the provision of structured opportunities for the interaction of the two groups, or to the improvement of conditions in the neighbourhood. Although Wolfson is one of the most run-down and neglected quarters of Acre, it has so far not been included in community development or urban renewal efforts.

The goal of the *Early Childhood Care and Education in an Integrated Jewish-Arab Community* project is to foster interaction and understanding between the two communities, as well as striving to improve the quality of life in the neighbourhood and to develop a better educational environment for the community's children. The cooperative task-oriented efforts of Arab and Jewish parents and other community members are basic to this. The project has from the beginning addressed itself to the needs of different system levels. This is reflected in interlocking activities designed to provide the child and his or her family with opportunities for development and growth within the context of an increasingly self-reliant community. Thus, as well as the training of Jewish and Arab women as para-professional early childhood educators, the project has provided leadership training for a mixed (Jewish-Arab, male-female) group of local community activists.

The project is in the unique position of being able to draw on the experience of both the Jewish and the Arab Foundation-supported projects in Israel. Programme activities include a home visiting programme, a neighbourhood drop-in resource and activity centre, a parent education programme, an extensive informal education programme for school-age children, community-based 'happenings', and a neighbourhood improvement project. House committees have been elected in the neighbourhood and, in turn, a neighbourhood council is active in promoting self-help neighbourhood improvement projects and is playing an increasingly significant advocacy role *vis á vis* the municipal authorities.

REFERENCES TO CHAPTER THREE

1 *Curriculum in Early Childhood Education – A Seminar Report*, Bernard van Leer Foundation, The Hague 1974. p 32

2 Ibid. pp 132-145; Bernstein, B. 'Education Cannot Compensate For Society' in *New Society*, 26, 1972. pp 344-347

3 Ibid.

CHAPTER FOUR

The story of an intervention: Ofakim

Project Education and Community Development in the southern development town of Ofakim, initiated in 1977, was one of the first projects in the Van Leer network to implement the new approach described in the last chapter.

As the first project of its kind in Israel, there was little prior experience to refer to or use as a yardstick. As project director, I time and again turned to my own experience of community life to strengthen my belief in people's capacity to shape their own lives and determine their own destinies. No less, it provided the living evidence that the self-reliant, autonomous community was neither an anachronism nor a romantic illusion.

When the Ofakim project was still in the planning stage, Dr Willem Welling, then Director of the Bernard van Leer Foundation, said something that lit my way in the most difficult hours. 'You may make mistakes, and you may even fail. But you must be able to explain why, so that we can learn from your experience'. It is that which I will attempt to do in this chapter in which the Ofakim experience is described as a brief case study and in the following chapter, in which the intervention process itself is analysed.

When the report of the Prime Minister's Commission For Children and Youth in Distress was published in the summer of 1973, it shocked the country by its revelation of the extent of educational and social disadvantage in Israel, especially in the development towns and depressed city neighbourhoods.

The report proposed a shift of emphasis from the individual to the community, emphasised the need for a multi-dimensional, integrated approach to combating disadvantage and called for the activation of the community to share in the process of social change and improvement. The impact of the report was delayed but also exacerbated by the Yom Kippur war which broke out shortly after its publication. For the first time, the sons of immigrants and of veteran settlers had fought and fallen side by side. For many of us, this served to sharpen the perception that the time had come to become personally involved in the effort to close the gap between the two Israels.

In 1974 I became deeply involved in a volunteer project, initiated by members of nearby *kibbutzim*, in the development town of Ofakim in the northern Negev.

We organised activity clubs for children in the neighbourhood air-raid shelters and summer camps in the *kibbutzim*, outings and workshops for parents and so forth. Somewhat naive in conception and amateurish in practice, this effort had obvious shortcomings, not the least of which was its over-directive, even paternalistic nature. It became increasingly obvious that despite our excellent intentions, we were fostering yet another form of dependence, and that without community self-help and the development of indigenous community leadership, no significant change would come about. Against this background, a group of *kibbutz* members working in the field, together with academics from Ben Gurion University of the Negev and representatives of the recently-established Regional College of the Negev, founded the Institute for Education and Community Development in order to foster community development practice based on education as a vehicle of social change.

Discussions with the mayor of Ofakim led to a project proposal which was submitted to the Bernard van Leer Foundation. This rather ambitious document proposed the development of a comprehensive, integrated programme of community-based educational activities, to be designed and operated by the community itself. It would demonstrate that the fullest development of the child's potential could best be achieved by means of an ecological approach, bringing together all the dimensions surrounding the child: family, school, peer group and community into a goal-directed network. Education could thus serve as a major vehicle for the promotion of social change and community development. In its focus and emphasis on family and community, on community self-functioning and the training of local people for programmes developed by the community itself, the proposal was a radical departure from established practice. In the present era, we would have called the plan a programme for empowerment.

In September 1977 the proposal received the Foundation's approval and support. After more than a year of planning the time had come to embark on project operations. Following the good advice of the Foundation's Executive Director, to 'go and put your ear to the ground' I spent the next few weeks familiarising myself with the community and its institutions, interviewing key individuals, and compiling a profile of Ofakim. Ofakim, as it revealed itself then, was typical of the development towns settled in the 1950s.

Ofakim: a profile

Established in 1954, the town in 1967 had a population of 8,500, which by 1976 had grown to 11,500. This growth was the result of a high birth rate, since fewer new immigrants were settling in the town than established settlers were leaving it. Ninety per cent of the population was of Afro-Asian origin; 75 per cent were from North Africa. The average family size was 5.6 compared to 2.9 in the nation as a whole. Employment was primarily in textiles and some light manufacturing, utilising mainly unskilled labour. Skilled jobs were scarce; many young people were unemployed, but were also unwilling to work for the minimum wage rate on an assembly line with no hope of advancement. Many of the professional and semi-professional white collar jobs were held by commuters from Beersheva (high-school teachers, social workers, nurses, etc.). Educational achievement in Ofakim was low, even when measured against other disadvantaged communities. Of the 400 children entering the school system yearly, less than a quarter completed high school and less than 5 per cent matriculated. Those who could, sent their children to boarding schools in other parts of the country. More than one third of the residents of the town received some form of social welfare.

Although the Ofakim Local Council had committed the township to the project, and even agreed to bear part of the operating costs, not everyone shared our enthusiasm. Years later, the director of the local Welfare Services office, who became one of the project's most ardent supporters, was to tell me that when I first showed up in his office he was ready to show me the door. As he told it, 'I had had my fill of outsiders coming in and telling us how to organise our lives. It was only when you began to talk of a local steering committee which would determine the programme, and the training of local staff that I was ready to give it a chance'.

Early strategies

The strategy adopted by the project called for the active participation of the community in the process of defining its needs, establishing priorities, and developing its resources. The project team saw its own role as that of catalyst, facilitator, and reservoir of specialised skills which would be available to the community in developing its own programmes. (I had by this time been joined by Tova, a native-born Israeli who had worked with Headstart in the USA, and by Shoshana, a local girl with a newly-acquired Bachelor of Education degree from Ben Gurion University).

As we explained our aims and strategy, we increasingly struck a responsive chord. A joint planning committee was chosen and charged with the task of determining the scope and focus of project activities in Ofakim. The local members of the planning committee represented the professional and political elites of the town, and their active participation in planning the project was seen as assuring its legitimation.

The planning committee began by concentrating activities in one of the older and more problematic neighbourhoods of the town. Two primary schools (one secular and the other religious) were chosen for a community school programme intended to encourage parent participation in the life of the school and school involvement in the life of the community. The headmasters of these two schools were recruited to serve on the committee and played an active role in operational planning.

A network of kindergartens provided pre-school education for all children between the ages of 4 to 6, as was customary in all 'disadvantaged' communities. Since these were not attached to the primary schools, we devised a separate programme to foster parent involvement in the kindergarten.

At the same time, representatives of the social services joined in the establishment of a neighbourhood family centre, which was to serve as the base for a variety of programmes: mothers' and toddlers' groups, activity and enrichment activities for school children, parents' study and activity groups, and so forth. The director of Welfare Services expressed his concern for the special needs of multi-problem families in the community, fearing that we would not succeed in bringing them into the programme. At his suggestion, we tabled a proposal for a joint project with the Ministry of Education and Culture's Educational Welfare Project, which made funding available for special programmes. This led to the design and development of the project's own home intervention programme, the EMRA programme. (EMRA is an acronym formed from the Hebrew words for mother and teacher, and the name is intended to convey the idea that the mother is the child's first and foremost teacher.) Last, but by no means least, a principled decision of major import was made: no programme would depend on people from outside the community at the operational level. Training of local people to staff the various programmes was thus accorded top priority.

In February 1978 the workplan prepared by the planning committee was approved by the Ofakim local Council and the Institute for Education and Community Development. A project steering committee was appointed composed of the director of the Department of Education, the director of the Department of Social Welfare, the director of the Community Centre, the two primary school headmasters and myself, with the recommendation that representatives of the neighbourhood community and of the parents be added to the committee once actual operations were under way. In addition, the local Council agreed to allocate 300,000 Israeli pounds for project activities during the fiscal year beginning that April. The first of April 1978 was also designated as the official launching date of the *Integrated Education and Community Development* project (this unwieldy name was eventually shortened to the *Community Education Project*).

The influence of politics

The steering committee functioned very effectively until the municipal elections in November 1978. In these elections, the ruling Labour Party was thoroughly trounced, the National Religious Party gained control of the local Council and the incumbent mayor lost his seat. At this point the project found itself confronting unanticipated difficulties. In a small town, especially one in which a relatively high percentage of the population is dependent in one form or another on the political establishment for employment, patronage, intervention with government agencies, and so on, the political elite cannot be ignored or circumvented. The choice is either to achieve legitimation or face opposition. While during the initial 'ear to the ground' stage of the project I had canvassed all the members of the political establishment and ultimately received their blessing, I had not taken into account the fact that the power structure of a community consists not only of those *in*, but also those *out* of power at any given moment. And now the tables had turned.

Throughout this first year of the project, a relationship of mutual trust and respect had developed and it seemed that the local Council was committed to the project. The mayor himself had forged the link between the project and the Educational Welfare Project of the Ministry of Education and Culture; he and I together had solicited additional funding from the Ministry for the community schools, and convinced AMIGUR, the housing authority, not only to allocate two flats to serve as a centre in the Eli Cohen neighbourhood, but also to assume responsibility for their renovation. Now I remembered his reluctance to bring the agreement which had been reached with the Institute for Education and Community Development before the plenary of the local Council for ratification, a reluctance which he explained by arguing that he wanted to avoid a confrontation with the opposition. As he explained, 'if there ever is a change of administration, if they are prepared to abide by the agreement, a formal document will be superfluous; if not, they will find ways of breaking it.' The first indication that we were headed for trouble came at the next meeting of the project's steering committee, when several members of the committee indicated that until such a time as the project gained the approval of the new administration, they would be unable to continue their participation. In private, each of these individuals assured me of his own continued support; on the whole they proved to be as good as their word.

A number of weeks passed before the new mayor agreed to give me an audience. When we finally met, he did not disguise his hostility. The fact that no one had seen fit to seek his support originally was for him sufficient indication that the project was not only the *protégé* of the prior administration but in cahoots with it politically. The project's steering committee was disbanded and the Institute for Education and Community Development now entered into protracted negotiations with the local Council, which continued for over two years in an atmosphere of hostility and uncertainty which often strained our nerves to the breaking point. Throughout this period we were never sure if we would be permitted to continue functioning. Nonetheless, not only did work proceed as planned, but financial obligations undertaken by the prior administration were honoured. Despite the fact that there no longer was an official body of local people responsible for the project's operations and our relations with the political establishment had become sorely attenuated, the various department heads and functionaries staff continued to consult and cooperate with us as the need arose.

Some years later, when political alliances once more shifted, I discovered the reason for this anomaly: members of the mayor's own party who had been working with us at the grassroots level had defended the project every time the issue of its termination was raised, arguing that the project was working with and benefiting their own supporters in the community no less than the opposition's. Similarly, the various programmes which we had initiated in conjunction with other agencies assured it of support beyond the town itself. Indirectly, cooperation with the Ministry of Education and Culture, the AMIGUR housing authority, the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare and the Kupat Holim Health Fund, all of whom had a financial stake in the project and saw themselves as sharing in its achievements, also served to safeguard the project's continued existence.

Prospects for continuation

As the project approached the end of its first three-year grant from the Foundation, the question of continuity was uppermost in our minds. Despite the hostility of the political establishment, we had progressed rapidly towards the creation of a network of coordinated and mutually reinforcing community education programmes: the EMRA home intervention programme, the play and parent guidance corners in the family health clinics, 'preparation for childbirth' classes, and mothers' and toddlers' groups in the two neighbourhood family centres all encouraged parents to become actively involved in their children's education from birth onward. There was a programme of parent involvement in the kindergartens and a programme of after-school enrichment and free-flowing activity for 3 to 7 year olds at the neighbourhood centres, in which parents were encouraged to join. In each of the two community schools, a 'school for parents' had been established; in the Givah school, the joint parent-teacher committee was making considerable progress towards bridging the gap between home and school. We had trained three groups of local women as para-professional community education counsellors, and it was they who ran most of these programmes.

During the first phase of the project the emphasis had been on intervention and innovation. The next three years were viewed as a period of consolidation and institutionalisation, during which the local staff of the project would gain the experience, expertise and self-confidence to continue on their own. The presence of 'outsiders' would steadily decline. Yet how could we request further funding without an assurance from the local authorities and a reasonable indication that they would be prepared ultimately to take over the programmes developed? The mayor had made himself absolutely clear: unless he had full control and received funding directly from the Bernard van Leer Foundation, he would not provide such an assurance.

In May 1980 the Labour Alignment concluded a coalition agreement with the ruling National Religious Party and rejoined the local Council executive. However, what finally tilted the scales was that some of the members of the mayor's own party in the local Council executive came to the conclusion that the project was of importance to the community and deserving of support. In July 1980, the local Council voted to continue cooperation with the Institute for Education and Community Development, on condition that the project was run by an independent association in which the municipality, through its direct representatives and through various functionaries appointed by it, would hold a controlling interest. To agree to this condition called for an act of faith – faith in the ultimate goodwill of these politicians, who were finally taking a step in our direction. Thus gave our consent to this condition, a step which we never had cause to regret, for once sharing in the decision-making processes and responsibility for the project, they proved themselves to be devoted and loyal. There was however an additional price exacted and that was that the project was to limit its involvement to early childhood and the pre-school years. (The parents' committee in the Givah school had become too independent and potent a force for the mayor's taste; when he attempted to depose the school's headmaster, basing his case on the fact that the latter was not a local resident, the parents' committee closed down the school and picketed the municipality. My own involvement did not go unnoticed.)

The second phase of the project

Throughout the second phase of the project, the executive committee of the newly-formed Ofakim Association for Education and Community Development met regularly and was intimately involved in the administration of the project. The project came under the full control of the Association, which now assumed responsibility for the fiscal management of the project and became the direct employer of the project's professional and para-professional staff. Since the members of the executive committee were influential in other spheres, their commitment to the project helped to further its legitimation and acceptance by the community and to further its growth. During the project's second three-year period, a third neighbourhood centre was opened. Despite the admonition to confine ourselves to early childhood, we became involved in a programme for teenage girls initiated jointly with the Department of Welfare. The parent involvement programme in the kindergartens provided the impetus for yet another innovation, developed in conjunction with the Ministry of Education and the Early Childhood Resource and Training Centre. In the neighbourhood family centres, the mothers' and toddlers' groups evolved into a cooperative playgroup programme, run jointly by the centres' para-professional staff and the mothers themselves. A regular morning activity programme consisting of discussion groups, toy making circles, cooking classes and so on was designed and implemented by the para-professionals and the mothers themselves.

In January 1983, the project began its last operational year. The executive committee of the Ofakim Association for Education and Community Development undertook the organisation of support and mobilisation of resources to finance the continuation of project activities after termination of Foundation funding in December of that year. On the whole this was successful. Project Renewal and the Educational Welfare Project of the Ministry of Education and Culture agreed to assume responsibility for the continuity of most of the project's programmes. Both these bodies, as well as the municipality itself, also agreed to the continued independence of the Association. Given that the project had come to an end, this was a quite extraordinary step. The continued functioning of the Association as a sub-contractor for community education would facilitate integration, cooperation and exchange of personnel between the project's various programmes as needed, while in its continued role as employer it would be in a better position to protect the work and staff from political pressures.

Ensuring continuity

As the final months of the project approached, we were able to congratulate ourselves that despite the rapidly deteriorating economic situation and the fierce competition for funds, we had been able to garner widespread support for our programmes. However, we were also keenly aware that all our careful planning and efforts to assure continuity might yet come to nothing, for once more the town was in a state of turmoil as municipal elections drew near. It was clear that the future of the project hinged on the outcome of these elections, to be held in November 1983, and until then all public activity not connected with the elections seemed to come to a standstill. Two of the members of the association's executive committee were contenders on opposing lists and both were running in opposition to the incumbent mayor. Government ministries and Project Renewal kept their distance and avoided making commitments which might later prove embarrassing. Everything we did was observed and commented upon, and rumours were rife: the project would be disbanded; it would be taken over by the municipality; no, there was nothing to worry about. The election results returned to office our old friend the mayor with whom we had concluded the original agreement that had brought the project to Ofakim, and dramatically brought to an end a long struggle for survival and legitimation a month before the termination of the project.

The last day of December 1983 was the official date for the transfer of the project to the municipality, but the umbilical cord was not cut until March 1984, the end of the fiscal year. My last act as project director was to prepare the proposals submitted to Project Renewal and other sources of funding and to lobby for their approval. Funds had become even scarcer, and the municipality, under the direction of our friend the mayor, decided that it was neither practical nor economical to continue maintaining a separate organisational framework to operate and coordinate project programmes. At the beginning of the new fiscal year the Association was in effect disbanded, while the project's para-professional staff and the one remaining local professional, who was to have continued as project coordinator, became employees of the municipality. The various programmes were brought under the jurisdiction of different municipal departments.

The project had emphasised integration of community-based educational programmes into a mutually reinforcing network. Not only was there no longer an integrating, unifying structure, but it became clear that while individual programmes might survive, the unique character and function of the project would be lost.

A solution finally presented itself in the form of the Ofakim Community Centre (an independent agency run by an autonomous association) to which was assigned the administration and coordination of the project's activities. Our struggle to preserve the integrated character of the project had achieved its objective. This proved to be a Pyrrhic victory. As the years went by, the Community Centre itself fell victim to power struggles; directors were hired and fired, and there were long periods when there was no one in charge. Some of our activities survived; others were unrecognisably changed in the hands of people who had little understanding of their intent and purpose; yet others were terminated as funding dried up.

Lack of a unifying force

The para-professional counsellors who, during the last year of the project, had in effect assumed full responsibility for the project's activities, soldiered on as best they could. What was lacking was a unifying force to channel their energies and devotion. For each of them, involvement in the project radically changed their self-perceptions and their lives, as they themselves bore witness time and again.

There is evidence that our concerted and coordinated efforts did indeed change parents' perception of their role in the education of their children. Some of our innovations became a permanent feature of community life, such as the afternoon enrichment centres, the parents' cooperative playgroup, and the Early Childhood Research Centre. Did our integrated community education programme act as a lever for social change and development at the community level? I have often asked myself that question, and in all honesty, must answer 'no'.

The political climate and the community's inability to move beyond self-destructive factionalism militated against that, as did the increasing influence of fundamentalist religious trends. The fact that the project (after the termination of the community school programme) was exclusively run by women, who in turn worked with women and children, served to diminish its impact on the life of the community as a whole. I like to think that in the final reckoning, the quality of life in this backwater of a town, whose people nonetheless are kind and warm, and whose doors are always open to neighbours and strangers alike, was significantly improved. I am by no means sure.

Ultimate significance

Ultimately, the significance of the Community Education Project in Ofakim lies in the fact that it established a paradigm for the projects that followed in its wake: many of the elements developed in Ofakim were adopted, and in time modified and improved, by other projects. The indigenous para-professional came to be regarded as the mainstay of community education. From the experience of this initial effort at educational intervention at the community level, others moving in similar directions could perhaps learn what pitfalls to avoid and what steps must be taken. It is with these issues that the following chapter concerns itself.

CHAPTER FIVE

Intervention, empowerment and the dialectics of social change

During the years when the Community Education Project in Ofakim was the overriding concern of my life, I would be upset by the question which would, from time to time, be asked by outsiders: 'why intervene?' At the time, the answer appeared to me to be self-evident and the question bordering on impertinent. Reflecting on that period has led me to conclude that the question is not only legitimate, but important and necessary.

'Intervention' is variously defined as 'interference in the affairs of others, so as to prevent or modify'; 'coming between as an influencing force'; 'coming in as something extraneous' and 'to come between as something unnecessary or irrelevant'. These definitions stretch from the benign and beneficial to the disruptive and harmful, sharing a common denominator of involvement in the affairs of others. This inevitably poses the question of 'why' and 'by what right' – questions which acquire added poignancy when the objective of the intervention is social change and the object a specific community of real people.

As to the 'why', one may reply: because we perceive a need, a problem, and believe that we hold the key to a possible solution; as to 'by what right', the social problems of the society of which we are part are inevitably our problems, and hence, a responsibility which we share.

How does a social problem acquire substance? Under what circumstances does a given set of social facts come to be perceived as a social problem? Sometimes a dramatic event or trauma will radically alter people's perception of their own situation, sufficiently disturbing their equilibrium so as to provide the impetus for social change. At other times, heightened awareness of a social problem will originate with individuals or groups who are themselves 'outside' the situation and not directly affected by it. Yet again, social unrest, or structural changes and changing values in the society at large may suddenly bring latent social problems into sharp focus.

However it comes about, perception of the existence of a social problem must precede action, and *ipso facto*, intervention for social change.

Thus my own answer to the question of 'why intervene?' was that once I became aware of the disadvantaged circumstances truncating the lives of my neighbours' children, this awareness would not let go of my conscience, and I was compelled to try and improve the situation by intervening.

Intervention and empowerment

One may rightly ask if this awareness is sufficient mandate to intervene, or interfere, in the lives of others. If intervention means imposing one's own preconceived solutions, no matter how well intentioned, to the problems of others, the answer is a categorical no. Only when intervention entails working with others, in agreement with them, to help them overcome their disadvantage, only when intervention leads to empowerment, may it be regarded as legitimate and justified.

Disadvantage and disempowerment

In its most blatant form, disadvantage is the outcome of oppression and exploitation, the by-product of the domination – political, economic, social, and cultural – of one group of people by another. In other cases, disadvantage is the lot of minority groups, indigenous or immigrant, whose cultural, ethnic, religious, or racial distinctiveness and divergence from the mainstream often correlate with political powerlessness and inferior socio-economic status. Yet again, disadvantage is closely linked to class position. In the developing world, disadvantage is often exacerbated by rapid modernisation and urbanisation and the accompanying attenuation of traditional community and family support structures.

Although the causes of disadvantage may vary, its outcomes tend to be similar. To be disadvantaged means to have fewer options and choices, to have limited access to resources, to have less opportunity to realise aspirations and potentials, reduced capacity to cope. To be disadvantaged means to be disempowered.

Only too often, society regards disadvantage not as the product of its own shortcomings, but as a manifestation of the inherent inferiority of the disadvantaged individual or group. This view is often internalised by the disadvantaged themselves and reflected in negative self-image and lack of self-confidence. Lack of control over the conditions of one's existence often results in an abandonment of effort which finds expression in apathy, fatalism, alienation, lack of motivation and general helplessness. These causative factors, objective and subjective, combine to perpetuate the phenomenon of disadvantage from generation to generation.

When governments attempt to come to grips with the problems of inequality of opportunity, access to resources and life chances, they often fail to break the cycle of disadvantage. A major cause of such failure is the tendency of statutory authorities to impose across-the-board, institutionalised solutions which do not begin to tackle the fundamental problems of dependence and helplessness. The unintended outcome is thus often yet further dependence and a deepening sense of frustration and powerlessness. It is only when individuals and communities gain a measure of control over their lives, when they are able to exercise choices and take decisions for themselves, that change of their own and their children's life-situation becomes feasible. It is only through the empowerment of the disadvantaged that disadvantage can be overcome.

Defining the problem

Perception of a social problem is followed by its definition. At face value, this appears to be self-evident. However, definition of the problem is the cornerstone of any intervention and has far-reaching consequences for the way it will be tackled. There are questions which have to be addressed. What are the causes of the problem and the circumstances which perpetuate its existence? What is its scope and its depth? Who are its primary victims? And who are its beneficiaries? The same set of 'social facts' can be set out in a variety of ways, and it is questionable whether there is ever one unqualified and unequivocal definition. Moreover, definitions of social problems inevitably reflect the value-matrix and societal perspective of the person making the definition. (For example, poverty can be defined as the outcome of socio-economic processes, the result of indolence, the product of exploitation, punishment inflicted by supernatural forces, and so on.) One of the initial problems facing the intervener is the existence of different definitions of the problem: the intervener's own, those of the client population and those of other forces in the field. Minimal consensus on the definition of the problem is thus crucial to successful initiation of intervention.

Projecting solutions and designating meta-goals

Perception of the problem and definition of its parameters are linked to the perception of solutions and the projection of the desired end state to be attained. This designation of the meta-goals of intervention should not be confused (especially in the mind of the intervener!) with designation of operational goals and objectives of the intervention – a later step. It is this vision of 'what might be' that provides the impetus to act, and that sustains momentum in the face of obstacles. At another level, perception of the solution and definition of goals are based on theoretical and practical understanding of ways in which the problem as defined can be overcome and informed by the accumulated experience and knowledge of the intervener and of others who have engaged in similar efforts.

The translation of theory into practice, the move from talking to doing, is a qualitative change, or even a jump of faith, fuelled by the belief in the possibility of planned change. Without such belief action is impossible. Intervention demands constant re-affirmation of this belief. The intervener's vision of 'what might be', and the constant communication of this to those concerned is a crucial factor in the success of intervention.

The dialectics of intervention in social systems

Intervention for social change implies the introduction of change into an existing social system. Regardless of their size, social systems are complex webs of interdependences which must be taken into account in planning change.

Any social system in which we intervene is in constant interaction with its environment, both affecting it and being affected by it. Such a social system is subject to strains, stresses and conflicts, vulnerable to pressures, and affected by shifting power relationships, both from within and from without. Insofar as there is a constant amidst these variables, it is the ubiquitous presence of change and resistance to change. It is impossible to plan for social change in linear terms of stimulus-response or cause-effect. Intervention, as defined here, is not a series of acts initiated by a change agent and carried out on a passive target population. It is a continuing, dialectical interaction involving change agent, clients and context, affecting changes in each.

In practice, intervention is a continuous chain of actions, feedback, self-correction and modification hopefully leading to improvement and refinement and to new innovations. The result should be a continuing process of self-sustaining change which will continue beyond the intervention itself.

The implications of this perspective for community-based interventions should be self-evident. In the first instance, it stresses the initial need for familiarity with the context of the intervention: to know and understand the community, its background and history; to study the structures and the internal dynamics of community life and its patterns of interaction with the environment. Understanding the workings of the community social system is necessary for effective initial planning, for the choice of strategy and tactics, for the setting of priorities and for the identification of key points for intervention.

Although the scope of an intervention may be limited to a specific segment of the population or specific type of activity (such as family-based early childhood programmes), there are many other facts of life in the community which the intervention project can ill afford to ignore. Only through awareness of and interaction with the broader community can the initial intervention expand its impact and influence and ensure its own continuity.

We are all embedded in contexts – families, neighbourhoods, work and social groupings, communities. This 'embeddedness' is not a static, but a dynamic feature and therefore change in one element within a given context will affect others. Nor are we always aware of the manner in which the systems directly concerning us affect and are affected by the broader systems in which they are in turn embedded. Looking at people and their problems in social systems terms has profound implications for the planning and implementation of any intervention effort. I again note the following points.

> Disadvantage: socio-economic, educational, cultural, or whatever other aspects one chooses to stress, finds its expression in the individual, however, the individual is not the locus of its origin. The disadvantaged child is embedded in and shaped by the disadvantaged family, whose problems are usually the result of wider societal factors. Tackling the needs and problems of the disadvantaged child without reference to the social context can at best ameliorate the symptoms – like prescribing aspirin to reduce fever. 'Diagnosis' and 'treatment' both call for a systems approach.
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> Although the young child is the key target of our interventions, these must address the primary, and for him or her most significant social system – the family. This implies searching for ways to reinforce and help the family to function more effectively. (Once more, we should remind ourselves that 'family' is both culturally and pragmatically variable.)
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> Awareness of the family's embeddedness within the broader context of the community leads to the search for ways in which the community can be made more responsive to family needs and more effective as a support structure. This perspective permits different strategies: direct intervention for change in existing systems (the school system, health and welfare services, housing authorities and so on); the development of previously non-existent structures (neighbourhood centres, day care facilities, home visiting programmes and so on); the better use of existing structures; cooperation and coordination of efforts, sharing of resources and multi-purpose use of facilities and services. Above all, the intervention project becomes a system-within-a-system: not a random collection of fragmented and unrelated activities, but an integrated network of mutually reinforcing programmes.
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> Viewing the intervention in these terms as a new system-within-a-system which upsets the equilibrium of existing systems within the community, highlights the need to consider the impact of the project not only on its target community but on those beyond it, whom the project does not directly address. This view of the project, as a system-within-a-system, is also of utmost importance for the institutionalisation and continuity of the innovations within the framework of the intervention.

Stages in the development of an intervention project

The choice of target group is usually based on prior information, assumptions and preconceptions regarding its needs and problems. These inevitably reflect at best a partial reality and often are refracted and distorted by the intervening agent's or agency's own perceptions. The challenge of trying to understand is awesome. Yet to attempt to intervene in the lives of others without striving to understand those lives is not only arrogant but a sure prescription for failure. How much the intervener needs to learn before beginning to act depends to some degree on his or her own social and cultural distance from the target population. But two things are certain: even if the intervener is a member of the target community, one cannot rely solely on one's intuitive understanding and haphazard knowledge; moreover, understanding is not a one-time act but a continuing process.

A community is not a vacuum, but a kaleidoscope of contexts. It consists of formal and informal organisations and power structures, coalitions and factions, elites and interest groups – each with its ideology, perceptions of self and situation, loyalties, priorities and agendas both manifest and hidden, as well as a residual history of interactions and memories of former conflicts and partnerships. Each has a variety of external interests and stake in the community. A community constitutes an incredible complexity of individual and group ties to other individuals and groups, both inside and outside the community. Last, but by no means least, there is the cultural context: the inner core of meaning and values which provides people with their sense of self and identity, shaping the way they live their lives and raise their children. And more often than not, there is also the confusion and unsettling effect of intermingling and clashing cultures and culturally conditioned values.

The need for legitimation

As already stated, intervention may challenge the internal equilibrium of the community, especially the equilibrium of power. The community-based early childhood education project – even in its most benign manifestation, devoid of any reference to 'empowerment' – will be perceived by some players in the power game as a potential threat and by others as a fortuitous opportunity to improve their position. The project, committed to the community at large, must reassure the former and disabuse the latter, striving for legitimation by relating to as many as possible official and unofficial gatekeepers, providers of services, power brokers, soliciting community leaders with interests in the community – this, in addition to the blessings of the political establishment, without which it may be very difficult to proceed at all. Some of these will never take an interest in the project; others will become the project's loyal partners and staunch defenders. But the destructive potential of those who were overlooked, or estimated to be 'not important', can be considerable. Finally, and by no means least important, comes the legitimation of 'the community' – the target population of the intervention – itself. The community, however, will delay judgement until its members have something tangible to relate to. Ultimately, theirs is the true legitimation, and the one that is the hardest to earn.

The role of the change agent

If social change is a developmental process in which growing awareness and perception of needs and problems is matched by growing capacity, skill and will to cope with them, it becomes evident such change cannot be imposed. It must be generated from within the system. The change agents's role is thus primarily that of facilitator and catalyst of change. This definition does not preclude other roles which he or she is called upon to play, sometimes reluctantly, from time to time: advocate, mentor, mediator, cultural interpreter, role model. A few words are in order here regarding tactics: the way one actually goes about the business.

Defining operational goals

The meta-goals of intervention are usually determined and established before actual intervention begins; they are rooted in our perception of problems and needs and our assumptions regarding possible solutions, and mediated by our values and world view. These meta-goals define the outer boundaries of the intervention – the range of desired and theoretically attainable outcomes. These premises apply equally to the general strategy of foreseen intervention. Thus, the meta-goals of the intervention efforts discussed here are the actualisation of the potential inherent in the deprived child, his family, and the community of which they are a part. Operational goals, on the other hand, although permeated by meta-goals, are context-bound.

Operational goals, the actual parameters of intervention, are determined and shaped in the interaction of intervener and context, negotiated between change agents and the community and its spokesmen, and subject to various pressures. For example, politicians in the community tend to press for immediate and demonstrable outcomes, even at the price of superficiality. Interveners, conscious of the fact that social change is a process and not a finite act, are concerned with the long range and lasting, even if less dramatic, results. Factors from both inside and outside the system affect the choice of operational goals: priorities, perceptions, preconceptions and values of both change agent and community; the presence of resources, both human and material, which can be mobilised; power relationships within the system and constraints imposed by external forces, and so forth. Operational goals reflect the balance between the desirable and the possible. The greater the change agent's knowledge and understanding of the context, the structure and dynamics of the system, the better the initial 'fit' of operational goals to the objective demands of the situation. No matter how good the initial 'fit', modifications and changes in operational goals are an unavoidable aspect of intervention for social change. Operational strategies are similarly determined, shaped as much by the constraints and emerging possibilities within the system as by the overall, 'grand strategy' of the intervention. Like operational goals, operational strategies must be flexible and changeable in response to changing circumstances.

Operational planning

Operational planning is the process of relating operational goals to actual activities. Activities are means to an end. A clear definition of this nexus of goals and action is crucial to the success of the intervention; without it, there can be no meaningful measure of success or failure, and little possibility of correcting mistakes along the way.

No less crucial is sharing this information with the target population – ideally by planning the intervention together. Action research, as a continuous joint endeavour of intervener and target population, is the logical approach of an intervention aiming for empowerment. By learning to analyse their own problems and to define their own needs; by weighing alternative options for a course of action, by reviewing outcomes and results and modifying actions, people gain an increasing sense of control over at least some aspects of their lives. Community participation in planning pays off in other ways as well: it ensures that planned activities are relevant in cultural terms and helps to overcome passivity and generate community interest and commitment. Finally, active community participation in planning and decision making clearly validates the change agent's role in the community's eyes as a resource person with certain skills and knowledge useful to the community.

Such community participation can also act as a safeguard against attempts made by special interest groups to gain control of the intervention effort for their own needs and purposes, under cover of acting in the general interest.

The tactics of empowerment

Intervention is ultimately about tactics: about the way one actually goes about the business of working with people to effect changes in their lives. The choice of tactics involves two considerations often regarded as antithetical to each other: efficacy and ethics. The ethical boundaries of intervention must be clearly delineated. There is no assurance that the new ideas and ways of doing things which one hopes to introduce will indeed lead to improvements in their life situations. One therefore must consider, time and again, the possible consequences of every act touching on the lives of others, and ensure that intervention causes them no harm.

Such tactics will be respectful of the dignity and interests of the individuals who are the target of intervention. Acceptance of others, their similarities and differences: respect for their values and culture – these set the boundaries for intervention. Respectful, humanistic intervention will by definition, be facilitative and supportive, searching for new options and opportunities for development and growth.

The choice of tactics is closely linked to objectives which in turn are derived from the way we define the situation to be changed: in our case, disadvantage and its central dimensions – powerlessness, dependence, lack of control over life conditions. The key objectives of intervention are the empowerment of the child, the family and the community, through increased awareness of options, informed choice, control and autonomy. These objectives set the coordinates which define the mode of the intervention.

Content must always be attuned to context; in the same way theory must be attuned to reality. Almost by definition, this precludes centralised planning, external control and the imposition of rigid models. It encourages awareness of the fact that there is more than one way of achieving an aim or designing a programme, and that there is no one universally-applicable formula. This approach focuses attention on process rather than structure, and allows for innovation and structural variation during the formative stages of an intervention. Structure becomes salient only when the community has defined its own needs and devised its solutions. The focus of attention then shifts to problems of continuity and sustainability.

Criticisms of the intervention approach

This approach has often been criticised, and from contradictory positions. One critique maintains that the effort to guide disadvantaged individuals and communities towards autonomy and self-determination constitutes a mischievous and misguided imposition of 'middle class values'. (The critics themselves enjoy the wide range of middle class options denied to those living in an idealised 'culture of poverty'.) The other criticism targets the contradiction between outside intervention and guidance and community self-help and self-actualisation. These critics however ignore the fact that self-direction and autonomous functioning, whether at the individual or the community level, can neither be legislated into existence nor achieved overnight. Empowerment must proceed in stages if it is to achieve lasting results.

The initial stage of intervention (regardless of level: individual, family, community) involves listening, learning, interpreting, trying to understand how people perceive their own situation, and what aspects of it they would like to change. The first step often involves overcoming fatalism and passivity, or their modern equivalents of cynicism and dejection, and gaining acceptance of the idea that planned and self-directed change is possible. Change of that sort implies choice and awareness of available options.

Acceptance of responsibility

To decide means to accept responsibility for one's choice or decision – and to risk failure. It is not surprising that people often prefer to have decisions made for them by others. However, choice, and the acceptance of responsibility for one's choice, is the true core of autonomy. The first task of any intervention is to expand the individual's or the group's awareness of options and to help them acquire the means to make informed choices. Responsible decision making is facilitated by providing encouragement and support – including support of activities whose success cannot be guaranteed in advance.

Interveners can be inclined to lose faith in the community's (or the individual's) capacity for autonomous functioning. They may themselves regress to a directive mode. Here it is important for the intervener to keep in mind that growth into autonomy implies enabling others to acquire increasing control over their actions. Regression to earlier modes of functioning is often tempting, and not unknown. Even more important, promoting self-directed and self-managed activity calls for a variety of skills that need to be learned and which have to be part of the 'curriculum' of any intervention. One of the crucial tasks of the intervener at this stage is to provide adequate feedback and reinforcement, while progressively disengaging from direct intervention in activities and programmes. As individuals' capacity for self-directed activity and responsibility grows, so does the potential for cooperative, self-managed community-based activities and programmes.

No less important than clearly defined operational objectives and tactics on the one hand, and strategic planning of relevant and appropriate programmes on the other, is the question of who implements the latter. When activities are run by people from the community a dual purpose is served. The activity itself is advanced, and community self-activation is increased. Enabling local people to conduct programmes and activities is both a means to an end and an end in itself.

Developing programmes to meet community needs: experimentation, innovation and project development

The development of effective programmes which meet community needs calls for flexibility and freedom to experiment. Even when based on established models, such programmes are not mass-produced, but custom-designed to fit the local situation. Planning does not preclude trial and error and/or modifications introduced in the course of implementation. Not everything works, and this is not always predictable in advance. Unanticipated changes in the lives of individuals and communities have their effect on programmes. On the other hand, intervention does not necessarily mean creating something new from scratch. More often than not, it consists of introducing new elements or new methods into existing structures and frameworks. However, some generalisations can be made regarding the development of programmes seeking to meet community needs.

> Community-based educational interventions should strive to reinforce the positive features of family and community life and local culture, and to build on existing strengths and resources. This is essential to the growth of self-esteem. No less, it makes change more acceptable.
>
> Interventions should strive for broad coverage and a variety of programmes geared to meeting different needs, but in a mutually reinforcing way. (For example, home intervention, mother and toddler groups, parent-run playgroups, family day care centres and courses for parents.) They should also strive to for vertical integration of activities, permitting the child to 'graduate' from one programme and move on to another appropriate to his or her age and development.
>
> The development of such comprehensive programmes should not only reinforce existing ties in a community, but help to forge new ties in communities where they have become attenuated or are non-existent.

Sustainability, continuity and the phasing-out of intervention

Ideally, the tactics of intervention should lead to autonomous self-functioning at both the individual and the community level. The intervention will have provided effective opportunities for individuals and groups to acquire new skills, knowledge and self-confidence as well as the experience of self-initiated, self-directed and autonomous action. It will have demonstrated the advantages of self-help. It will have trained local leadership.

Innovative programmes alone do not provide assurance of lasting change. No less important are the structural underpinnings of change and innovation. Unless the appropriate infrastructure is established to ensure continuity and development, the best intervention efforts are doomed to become a passing episode.

Autonomous organisational and administrative structures minimise bureaucracy, maximise flexibility and encourage innovation. These same structures may, however, be less effective once concern shifts to the consolidation and institutionalisation of achievements and special resources come to an end. At that point, existing institutions are better equipped to provide for continuity. To achieve this, there is no one guaranteed formula. Each project must work, during the different stages of its development, between the extremes of total autonomy and total control by the establishment.

Decentralisation, self-management, community autonomy and local control are givens of the approach examined here. Projects should therefore commit themselves to the establishment of local steering committees and administrative structures encouraging community engagement in the work and leading towards self-functioning. This should include the representation of official and voluntary community organisations. What is sought is a wide coalition. The greater the potential community support, the greater the possibility of disarming potential opponents, the greater the opportunity for autonomy.

Local government and statutory agencies should have a stake in the project. The more these commit resources of their own – facilities, money, people – the more ready they will be later on to underwrite their continuation. No less important is the influence which the intervention project can exert on the operation of established organisations and institutions in the community. Efforts to establish ties and working relationships with these (educational institutions, health and welfare services, women's organisations, and so forth) open up possibilities for cooperation and establish new growth points for innovation. These contacts can lead to a broadening of established services, increasing their awareness of and responsiveness to community needs.

Evaluation is often seen as the bugbear of intervention projects. For some reason, the idea that one should be able to evaluate the outcome of one's efforts is often the cause of anxiety and fear of external interference. Evaluation – especially formative evaluation gauging the extent to which operational objectives are or are not being achieved and the causes of divergences – is important above all to the interveners themselves. Without formative evaluation it is difficult to monitor progress and to introduce modifications and changes at the appropriate time. Learning to define goals and objectives and to evaluate the extent to which they have been attained, to assume responsibility and to evaluate one's own actions, is an important aspect of training for autonomy.

A final word and caveat

The best any intervention can achieve is to help people acquire the tools and show them how to use them. After that, what happens is up to the community itself, and the people who live in it.

CHAPTER SIX

The jewel in the crown: the indigenous para-professional community educator and change agent

Common to all the community education projects from Ofakim onward is the pride of place accorded to the para-professional, recruited from the community itself and trained to function as educator and facilitator, role model and change agent. The indigenous para-professional is the hallmark of the Foundation's community education projects and the exemplification of the principles guiding their development. The indigenous para-professional is pathfinder and guide along the path to empowerment.

The idea of the indigenous para-professional has been adopted from social work practice and radically changed to serve a different purpose and to reflect a different philosophy. Underlying the original concept was an effort to humanise social welfare organisations and to improve service delivery by providing channels for client participation and involvement. The indigenous para-professional employed by human service organisations usually fills the role of mediator between the middle class professional and the lower class client. His or her role is generally clearly circumscribed. The professional guilds and unions make sure that the boundary lines between professional and para-professional are not breached.

In the community education projects we have turned this definition on its head: the indigenous para-professional is the principal facilitator of change in the community; the professional from *outside* the community has the ancillary role and task of 'putting him/herself out of business'. Almost without exception, the projects' front-line workers are indigenous para-professionals. The boundary lines between 'professional' and 'para-professional' have been deliberately blurred. The para-professional is increasingly responsible for 'professional' functions. Every new project has trained indigenous para-professionals as the key to effective community intervention. Training is thus a vital component of projects throughout all stages of their development. It is a continuous, open-ended process in which new habits of self-development and life-long learning are shaped.

Why para-professionals?

The rationale for training members of the community to develop and conduct project activities was spelled out in the original Ofakim project proposal:

> 'The project will facilitate the training of members of the local population in the fields of education and community work, in order to decrease the community's dependence on outside elements and enhance its capacity to respond effectively to the problems and challenges facing it.'

Mohammed Haj-Yahia[1], in a study of para-professionals in the East Jerusalem project in the Old City of Jerusalem, examines the rationale behind the training and employment of indigenous para-professionals. He makes the following points:

> Recruitment and training of women from the target population as para-professional workers transfers them from one side of the societal fence to the other, from being passive and dependent recipients of assistance, who have internalised society's negative view of them, to becoming active members of the community able to give to others, and consequently, able to take pride in themselves. The feeling of 'I don't have enough strength to give of myself' is replaced by that of 'I'm capable, I can give to others'.
>
> Generally, professional workers belong to the stronger class of society and their clients to the weaker. Employment of women from a similar socio-cultural and demographic background bridges this gap, provides a role-model for the more passive and apathetic, and initiates a process of change in self-image and self-identity.
>
> Indigenous workers who share the lifestyle, values, traditions and mentality of their 'clients' are best able to understand the latter's problems and build a relationship of empathy and trust. This in turn enables them to assume the role of 'significant other' from *within* the community rather than from outside it.
>
> Employing indigenous workers casts the community in the role of partner in its own social progress; it reinforces the community's perception of itself as able to improve its own situation.

These themes recur in all the projects in Israel. Without exception project directors, when asked to identify the single most important feature of their project, reply 'the para-professionals'. Even more telling is the evidence of the para-professionals themselves, which testifies the efficacy of this approach to individual and community empowerment. Thus, for example, Yonah Suad's experience as a para-professional counsellor in the *Early Childhood and Family Development Project* in Morasha:

> 'I came to Israel as a little girl with my parents in the 'fifties.
>
> 'As soon as we settled I was sent to school, but I didn't finish school: when I was sixteen my parents decided that I should get married. Now I

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> have five children, and for the first 22 years of my marriage I never went out to work, because I always felt that the children and the house were enough. One day, by chance, my little girl brought home a circular from her kindergarten announcing the first training course for para-professionals in Morasha. I read the circular and decided then and there to sign up.
>
> 'I registered for the course and was accepted. I began studying and saw what I'd missed during all those years of staying at home. At the end of the course I thought "Here goes, I'll go straight back to the dishes, the children, my husband, the house". But I was wrong. They told me that I had been accepted to work as an EMRA counsellor. When I told my husband that I'd been accepted he said "I don't want you to go out to work, but if that's what will make you happy, go ahead." So, overnight I changed from being an anonymous housewife to an EMRA home visitor in the neighbourhood.
>
> 'I began to see the difficulties other people have, how others' children grow up, how the community functions. I discovered another life outside. Now, after working in the project for three years, every day still gives me a good feeling and I can't imagine what it would be like not working with mothers and children. This year, five of us have signed up for a course at the Open University, to improve our knowledge. Who would have believed that we, who were once just plain housewives, would be studying at a university!'[2]

Training para-professionals

Projects tend to train new contingents of para-professionals every year: since most para-professionals are women who are themselves mothers of childbearing age, there is a constant need to replace workers on maternity leave and for other reasons. Training courses are at times organised locally by a project, sometimes they are organised in conjunction with a sister project, or on a regional basis, by one of the resource and training centres which have grown out of the projects. These courses are one of the major vehicles for upgrading the skills and knowledge of local women.

Selecting trainees

Selection criteria for trainees are very similar from project to project. Candidates must be resident in the community, have a minimal formal education of eight to ten years and be able to cope with written course material. The exception is the *Beta Yisrael* project. Most of the Ethiopian immigrant women had little formal education and the project designed a training programme tailored to deal with their special needs. All the projects stress non-formal, 'people-oriented' criteria, such as flexibility and openness and the ability to work together with others in a team. Selection criteria reflect the culture of the host community. Thus the East

Jerusalem project asks candidates to obtain their husband's agreement to participation in the course. (In the very traditional Arab community of the Old City, women's work outside the home and even more so, the idea of women entering the homes of others who are not relatives is not common practice. It is unthinkable that a woman would do so *without* her husband's consent. In secular Jewish communities, neither practice is frowned on today; however, the phenomenon of men for whom the idea of their wives working poses a threat to their self-esteem is more common that one might think!)

Initial selection of candidates for the training course is a careful process. The intimacy of relationships in close-knit communities and small towns, and the ties and loyalties that develop within a group while studying and working together, make dismissal from the course particularly painful and disruptive. It is thus extremely important that the initial judgement be as accurate as possible.

The initial training course: curricula and methodology

Projects have experimented with a variety of course structures. What is the right balance of theoretical and practical course material? Is intensive initial training followed by regular in-service training sessions to be preferred? Or alternatively, a short basic course followed by additional periods of intensive study once the para-professionals have gained some 'hands-on' experience? No matter what the design, it is impossible to cover all areas and topics in the introductory course. The aim is to create awareness of basic principles and provide basic skills. A review of the different training models designed by projects reveals a general tendency towards an intensive basic training course held four to five mornings each week. Course length varies from four to ten weeks, with the courses providing a minimum of 70 and a maximum of 200 hours of initial training.

Projects have become increasingly aware of the need for formal recognition of para-professional training and certification of para-professional educational workers by the statutory agencies. Increasingly, training aims to provide the indigenous para-professional not only with basic skills, but with marketable skills and formal entitlements. How the project goes about providing this training depends greatly on the initial educational level of its trainees. The quest for formal recognition is, however, not pursued at the expense of the projects' educational philosophy. Design of curricula follow the 'concentric circles' concept which guides project activities and which seeks to include the child, the family and the community in one interactive network. Initial training seeks to provide the para-professional with some basic knowledge and understanding of each of these elements, and with the practical tools for working with children and their parents within the community setting.

For para-professional trainees, the return to the classroom is often accompanied by anxiety and fear of failure. Perhaps the most important task of the training course is to develop the trainee's self-confidence and self-esteem. Courses combine theoretical study with 'hands-on' experience of the subject matter under consideration whenever possible, preferring experiential learning in a workshop setting to formal lectures whenever possible.

Haj-Yahia[3] discusses the importance of group work and techniques such as role play and simulation in the training of indigenous para-professionals. Group work provides opportunities for give-and-take interaction. Mirroring and feedback enable the trainee to recognise her own strengths and reinforce her ability to adapt to various roles and ways of functioning. Group work in a setting where she is accepted 'as she is' provides her with insight into her own behaviour, attitudes and values. Self-understanding is acquired through interaction with others and enhances inner control.

Equality is one of the bases of group work. Participation in a group of one's peers with a trainer who is part of the group encourages self-expression, self-confidence, and the sense of being equal among equals. Group work provides a democratic modelling experience and sharpens awareness of the fact that it is possible to approach a problem from more than one perspective. Cultivation of the group framework during the initial training period establishes a firm basis for future work in the project: the group continues to meet regularly as a work group and 'learning community' and acts as an informal support group for the project's 'frontline' workers.

Projects largely rely on their own staff and other resource people from the community for the training of para-professionals, bringing in outsiders for specialised subjects only. This is not only cost-effective, but also permits the project staff to become acquainted with potential colleagues. It helps the trainees to internalise the philosophy and operational style of the project during this initial training period. Veteran para-professionals play an active role as trainers, especially in the practical workshop sessions.

One of the inherent dangers in training para-professionals is underestimating their ability and learning capacity. Independently of each other, projects have discovered that as they raise their expectations, trainees happily extend themselves to meet them. One of the truly rewarding experiences for any trainer of para-professionals is to follow the personal growth and the unfolding of abilities of women who in some cases for the first time in their lives have the opportunity to express themselves as individuals, to be listened to and to be rewarded with respect and understanding.

At the conclusion of the fifth Ofakim training course in 1981, the course participants were asked to evaluate the course. The following are some of the comments:

> 'The course has made me aware of many things which I had not thought about before, and which were unfamiliar to me.'
>
> 'The course has helped me to understand myself and my relationship with my husband and my children. My husband learned alongside with me; when I came home in the evenings I would tell him what we'd learned that day.'
>
> 'I've applied the things I learned in my own family, and I can see the changes in my own children and in my attitude to them.'
>
> 'I've become much more aware of the child's needs and I have gained a much better understanding of how to meet those needs. It makes me want to have another child, because I'm sure I'll do a much better job this time.'
>
> 'I didn't believe I'd be able to go back to school and to do all the assignments but I got along alright, and it has given me the confidence to try to begin a new chapter in my life.'
>
> 'The group dynamics sessions made me more aware of other people's feelings and of how other people see me.'
>
> 'I'm sorry the course is so short; now I really feel the need to go on and learn more!'

In-service training: self-development and expanding responsibility

Initial training is only the first step in a continuing process of upgrading skills and knowledge and extending the responsibility of the indigenous para-professional staff for programme operations. The aim is to prepare members of the community to run programmes and activities independent of outside help, and to provide the community with a reservoir of trained local leadership. The training of indigenous project staff is thus as much an end in itself as a means to an end.

The inadequacy of the term 'para-professional' has already been indicated: the Hebrew designation of 'pre-professional', with its implication of built-in opportunities for individual growth and development, is more accurate. The investment in regular in-service training, individual and group guidance and supervision, study days and refresher courses pays off in growing ability to function independently and to shoulder responsibility. Neither the specific content nor the frequency of in-service training are critical dimensions. However, regular infusions of additional skills, knowledge and enrichment are essential for effective functioning of para-professionals (as indeed they are for the professionals, but that is usually more clearly perceived!)

The status of the para-professional in the community

The emphasis which projects have begun to place on certification and official recognition of the status of para-professional calls for some further discussion.

From time to time, the question is raised why, if one of the key aims of projects is the enhancement of the community's capacity for self-help and self-activation, para-professionals in projects are paid employees rather than volunteers? This is often asked by people who themselves may be actively involved in volunteer work in their own communities, either in their spare time and in addition to a well-paid job, or in order to fill their time with meaningful activity because they do not, and often do not need to, hold down a regular job (voluntarism is to a large extent a middle class, middle age preoccupation). Para-professionals do indeed derive a great deal of satisfaction from their work. However, mothers of small children living in disadvantaged communities go out to work primarily because they need the money to help support their families. This is as true for para-professionals as for other women (and is also the case in 'advantaged' communities). The fact that unemployment rates in these communities are generally much higher than the national average does not mean that the indigenous para-professional should be expected to work for free or for a pittance. On the contrary, one of the important aspects of training should be to equip women with the skills to compete in the employment market.

One face of voluntarism is focused on 'helping the less fortunate' the ill, the maimed, the old, the societal cast-offs, the poor with the aim of ameliorating the conditions of their lives. Yet another face of voluntarism involves 'the quality of life' in the community: citizens' rights, road safety, crisis hot-lines, battered children or women and other matters. Both of these types of voluntarism are concerned with aspects of life which are the responsibility of the state, but which the state does not or cannot discharge effectively. They are not concerned with the provision of basic services and amenities. However, one of the characteristics of the disadvantaged community is often precisely this lack of basic provision and amenities which members of the community have the right to expect at the same level as other communities. When educational and socio-economic disadvantage overlap and reinforce each other, society and the state are at least in part at fault: if communities 'in need of fostering' are served by schools 'in need of fostering' and staffed by teachers 'in need of fostering', at least some of the blame must be laid at the government's doorstep.

Throughout this study I have attempted to demonstrate that effective change can only come about when communities analyse and define their own needs clearly and mobilise to meet them. The acquisition of the skills and self confidence needed to organise and run its own programmes and facilities does not mean that the community should be expected to provide for itself, on a voluntary basis, the basic services and amenities that elsewhere are subsidised and maintained by statutory authorities. Community empowerment means decreasing dependence on outside assistance and replacing people brought in from outside the community with the community's own trained people. It means also unwillingness to settle for second-best standards and attenuated provision. It means demanding equal rights as equal citizens, and not as 'deserving poor'. If projects are to evolve into established community provision, para-professionals must not only be trained, but trained so as to meet formal requirements; they must be assured of accepted social and employment benefits and paid according to recognised salary scales, much as the innovative programmes which they staff must be eventually adopted and incorporated by the relevant statutory authorities and by their non-statutory equivalents. Community self-help, in disadvantaged communities as elsewhere, is based on enlightened self-interest (which is not the same as selfish self-interest, and is indeed enhanced by cooperation with one's neighbour!). Once community self-help is perceived in this way, voluntarism can develop as an additional and natural dimension of community life.

Basing early childhood education programmes and provision on para-professionals whose training has met and even surpassed the demands of the statutory authorities contributes to the high regard which these programmes enjoy and to their chances of being adopted by statutory and other authorities.

The jewels in the crown

Many women in disadvantaged communities face the lack of options in their lives. Possessing limited education and little or no job training, often married too early and giving birth too quickly to a succession of children, life for them is narrowly circumscribed and frustrating. By preparing para-professional trainees for official certification, projects in effect open up new opportunities for employment for women in the community and expand the life options available to them.

Some years have elapsed since I was last directly and personally involved in the daily work of a community education project. My memories of that period of my life are intimately intertwined with the memory of the women with whom I shared that experience, its frustrations and its joys, its painful failures and its hard-earned successes, the para-professionals who indeed were 'the jewels in the crown' of the project. It is hard to define what it was that made them so special; some of it was no doubt that elusive combination of intelligence, restlessness, curiosity, sensitivity, concern, and hunger for new experience that led them to us in the first place; some of it undoubtedly was generated by the project itself and its constant demand to 'put oneself on the line'. Be that as it may, there is no doubt that they had a special *élan*, a quality of self-awareness and confidence, an empathy with others and a sure touch that made them stand out and led other women to emulate them.

For me, 'para-professional' always triggers memories of Margo, whom I first met in an English class I taught at our community school. She was the mother of a deaf child who, following her intuition, she successfully fought to keep in a 'regular' class, coming to school daily to help the teacher and working with her daughter after school (later, she had another deaf child, and worked intensively with her too). She herself had left school at 14, but she wanted better for her children. When she came to work in the project, she applied that same sure intuition, love and tenacity, now fortified with newly acquired skills and knowledge, to her work with other mothers and their children. Her husband David spoke of her with new-found respect:

> 'She was changed by the project from one end to the other; she became a completely different woman from the one I married 11 years ago. She's something special! How? She's always a leader in her work, everyone comes to her to consult her, to ask her questions. She gets great satisfaction from her work. How many times I told her not to do it! At first I thought that she'd neglect the house. But she's hooked on it; she loves it; she's completely sold on her work!'[4]

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1. Haj-Yahia, M. *A descriptive paper about the para-professionals in the project.* Community and Early Childhood Education project, Spafford Community Centre, Jerusalem, March 1984
2. *Alternatives in Early Childhood Care and Education*, Report of the Bernard van Leer Foundation, 1984-85. Bernard van Leer Foundation, The Hague, 1986. p 39
3. Haj-Yahia. *op cit.*
4. The quotation is taken from a video made of the Ofakim project in 1983: *New Horizons.*

CHAPTER SEVEN

The nuts and bolts of intervention: home visiting programmes

The main concern in earlier chapters was with the strategies of intervention and empowerment. Attention now shifts to the actual content and activities which constitute the 'nuts and bolts' of the community education project. In this chapter we look at home visiting programmes while in the next, we examine a number of other programmes developed in response to the needs of children, families and communities.

In designing and developing programmes and activities to fit a specific set of circumstances our approach has been eclectic. We did not necessarily attempt to re-invent the wheel each time; instead we brought together elements derived from different sources in order to construct a wheel best fitted to our own paths to empowerment.

The distinguishing feature of the community-based educational projects which are the subject of this study is their holistic character: the manner in which they integrate a diversity of programmes which reinforce each other into a network which is more than the sum of its parts. Much of this quality is inevitably lost when focus shifts to discrete components and programmes are analysed as distinct entities.

The inner circle: early childhood care and education in the community

The inner circle of all Van Leer Foundation-supported project activities in Israel are the family and community-based programmes concerned with the care, well-being and optimal development of the young child from birth to age three or four. Not only are these years decisive in terms of the child's healthy physical growth and optimal emotional and intellectual development, these are also the best years for intervention efforts aimed at the prevention of disadvantage, rather than compensation for its damaging effects.

At this time the child is most dependent on the parent for all aspects of his or her well-being. The direct responsibility – and no less the direct influence for good or bad – of parents for their children is greatest and the importance of a healthy and stimulating home environment for the child's development is most evident. Paradoxically, these are the years when parents are also most dependent on their own resources – for these are the years most neglected by government and statutory authorities, even in affluent countries. At this time parents are most in need of support and guidance, and community and neighbourhood-based mutual aid and self-help schemes make obvious sense. In other words, these are also the best years for intervention efforts aimed at education and community development.

Various community and family-based early childhood programmes have been developed in the Israeli projects in response to often similar problems in different contexts. The universal need of young children is for a healthy home environment fostering growth and development, while their families' need is guidance on how best to provide it. The variety of social and cultural settings in which projects function has produced rich variations on the same theme.

The group of programmes described in this and the next chapter share the assumption that a healthy family environment is the key to the healthy development of the child. Although the child is the ultimate target, intervention efforts are aimed at the family. All strive to help parents understand their children's developmental needs and learn how to attend to these needs – physical, emotional, and intellectual – within the environment of the home. All stress the importance of active parent-child interaction in ways enjoyable and rewarding for both. All strive to build up and reinforce the self-confidence and self-esteem of the parent and, through the parent, the child.

Most projects initiate more than one type of family education programme to meet the needs of different sub-groups in the community. Sometimes one type of programme (such as home visiting) may predominate in the early stages of a project, with a different type (such as parents' groups) predominating in later stages.

Home visiting programmes

One of the major challenges is to reach those families in the community who are most in need of guidance and support, to foster self-reliance rather than increased dependence, and enhance the family's self-esteem and self-image rather than stigmatise it for its inadequacies. Their success in meeting the above requirements is a distinguishing feature of the home visiting programmes developed by the projects. One must add two further crucial and distinctive elements:

> in the home visiting programmes guidance and counselling are provided on a peer-to-peer basis by indigenous para-professionals who are themselves neighbours and mothers of small children; and
>
> the home visiting programme is often the initial thrust of intervention, rather than an end in itself; reaching out to the family is accompanied by

> efforts to draw the family into broader group participation, cooperation and involvement in the community.

Home visiting programmes are especially useful in reaching the isolated, alienated, insecure or passive parent: the young mother at home alone with a new baby; the harassed parent coping with difficulty with a brood of small children born in quick succession; the parent of the handicapped child; the recent immigrant unfamiliar with the demands of the new society; the disadvantaged family overwhelmed by a multitude of problems; and those in whom fatalistic acceptance of their lot has dulled the very perception of their own needs.

The 'first generation' of home intervention programmes were developed in Ofakim and East Jerusalem. Later projects adapted and modified them to fit their own needs, and added new and innovative elements to the basic models.

Ofakim: the EMRA home visiting programme

Initially introduced in 1978 to help disadvantaged families to contribute to the education of their children and the organisation of their family, by 1980 the EMRA programme was stressing the role of the mother as the child's first teacher, and working to change priorities, attitudes and behaviour patterns in the family. This was reflected in the name of the programme: EMRA – an acronym formed from the Hebrew words mother and teacher. The programme's key objectives were 'improving parental functioning and enhancing parental self-image, by:

> teaching parents how to provide the child with adequate stimulation through utilisation of the resources available in every home;
>
> encouraging parents to recognise and exploit educational opportunities present in the environment and in everyday situations; and
>
> helping parents to acquire the skills, knowledge and confidence enabling them to play an active role in their children's development and education.'

By gradually reducing individual guidance of the parent in the home, and stressing greater involvement in group activities in the project's neighbourhood family centres, the programme hoped to avoid too much dependence on the para-professional home visitors. The target population of the EMRA programme was families with one or more children under the age of three, and mothers who were not employed and who were raising their children at home. Once EMRA became known in the community, many families asked to join. The families participating were a cross-section of the population of child-bearing age. Their profile belied the stereotype of the disadvantaged family. There was little evidence of the classic syndrome of deprivation – inadequate income, overcrowding, high birth rate, lack of education or occupational skills. Most of the fathers were skilled or semi-skilled workers; the mothers, all housewives, had usually completed nine to ten years of formal education. However, disadvantage expressed itself in other forms.

Many families were completely unaware of the need to provide children with a stimulating and enriching home environment. Books and toys were rare and when they were to be found in the home, were usually unsuitable (it was not unusual to find an expensive toy put away out of the child's reach so that it should not be broken, or an expensive set of encyclopedias). Especially among the younger families, little attempt was made to plan expenditures rationally, to shop economically, to organise household tasks efficiently. As a result there was often a chronic lack of time, energy and money. The underlying cause appeared to be ignorance and the absence of appropriate role models and guidance.

When parents became aware of the need to provide their children with more than basic physical care, they usually lacked the skills, knowledge and self-confidence to do so. Parents in the programme were increasingly drawn from the second generation which had grown up in the town (the first generation had by then reached the end of the child-bearing cycle). Although better educated than their immigrant mothers, these young women were often raising their own children under worse conditions than had been their own lot. Often married while in their teens, and soon burdened by two or more children, they tended to view their offspring as jailers who kept them tied to the home 24 hours a day, and they vented their frustrations on the children.

Use of Contracts

In order to encourage the families who joined the programme not to regard themselves as recipients of a service, but as partners in a learning experience, a contract was designed, defining the responsibilities and rights of the participating family on the one hand, and of the EMRA counsellor on the other. This contract was signed on the first home visit, after the day and time of future visits was agreed upon. Each family was required to pay a nominal fee, which covered part of the cost of the materials provided. An initial acquaintance form was filled out, with direct open questions addressed to the mother.

These questions helped the counsellor to engage the mother in broader discussion concerning the child and the mother's childrearing practices and enabled her to form a general picture of the home environment and how the family functioned. The questions also acted as an ice-breaker, establishing an easy relationship with the mother. For the mother, filling out the questionnaire gave her a feeling of participation from the beginning. The questionnaire also provided base line information for the evaluation of parent-child interaction and changes in parental behaviour brought about by the programme. At first, the EMRA team experimented with inappropriate materials from other settings. Later, The team of para-professional EMRA counsellors, together with the project evaluator, designed an inventory of parental functioning based on the 'content world' of the parent themselves. This proved to be an effective and sensitive evaluation instrument.

At the second home visit, the counsellor would bring a home-made toy or game as a gift for the child, and established a working relationship with the mother and her child. After modelling the activity, the mother was encouraged to follow the counsellor's example and to play with the child. The third home visit was devoted to assessing the child's developmental level in various areas of functioning – cognitive, sensory-motor, social, language, and so on – so as to establish a baseline measure and guidelines for building an individualised programme for each child. This was done with the help of the mother, using the Denver Developmental Screening Test, which has been standardised for use in Israel. The Denver Test was administered two or three more times during the year in order to monitor the child's progress and to provide the mother with tangible feedback. Utilising this base line information, the para-professional counsellor, with the help of the professional supervisor, designed a programme to meet the needs of the child and the mother.

Need for materials

Initially, the lack of written materials made it necessary for the supervisors to plan every home visit in detail with each para-professional counsellor. Each home visit focused on activities designed to stimulate the child's development in different areas – cognitive, motor, social and emotional – using simple and inexpensive toys, games and materials readily available in the home. The parent was shown how 'junk' materials and everyday objects in the house could fulfil similar functions. This approach was intended to encourage both para-professional counsellors and parents to devise their own activities and to encourage the child to do the same and was felt to be an important element in fostering a sense of competency and self-reliance.

All activities stressed the importance of the involvement and interaction of the parent with the child. EMRA also supplied the mothers with basic materials for making books and games and with a limited number of bought toys and books. In addition, toys, books, puzzles and games were periodically loaned to the family. Each home visitor carried in her kit a number of activities suitable for older children – collage materials, plasticine, and so on. This was especially useful if the home visit took place at times when the family's older children were present. In families with more than one child under age three, the home visitor planned her visits to fit the needs of each child, and helped the mother to cope with such issues as sibling rivalry and the potential problems of caring for several small children.

Core curriculum

The Early Childhood Core Curriculum developed in the EMRA programme was based on the developmental needs of the child throughout the first three years of life. It focused attention on the whole child and his or her developmental needs at each stage. It stressed the fact that children learn through play, and that parents can help their children's development by providing appropriate play (learning) opportunities and support, encouragement and guidance. Play ideas were grouped under 21 main headings, according to the type of activity (or materials) involved; the activities under each heading were arranged in developmental sequence. Language development and the importance of talking with the child was stressed throughout. Eventually published as a book under the title *Step by Step and Side by Side*[1], the curriculum was adopted for use by other projects, day care centres, teacher training institutes, and individual parents who came across it and found it helpful. Once trained to work with the Core Curriculum: how to choose an activity suitable to the child's developmental level and needs, how to present the activity to child and mother, and how to plan a home visit based on the mother's play activity with the child, the para-professionals were able to plan home visits independently.

On more than one occasion, the para-professional home visitors encountered special needs and problems which their training had not equipped them to deal with: severe developmental problems, malnutrition, violence within the family and so on. In these cases they acted as intermediaries between the family and the relevant specialised agency. In some cases, their work with the family enabled them to provide the kind of support and guidance that the statutory authorities, with all the professional expertise at their disposal, were unable to give. Rachel worked for two years with the mother of a child with Down's Syndrome, from the initial point of helping the mother to accept the child; Margo worked in close cooperation with the health clinic's pediatrician in several cases of retardation discovered by her in her work with families; Mazal provided support for a mother of two small children widowed when her husband was killed on reserve duty. In each of these (and many other) cases, the home visitor brought to bear not only her training and her own qualities of empathy and understanding, but her familiarity with the cultural background of the families. This enabled her to reach people who were often beyond the reach of the official agencies and the helping professions.

Group meetings

A key element in the EMRA programme was the monthly group meeting of mothers. These, planned and conducted by the EMRA counsellors, provided a forum for women to share experiences, make new friends and learn from each other. They were an important step towards community self-help and self-functioning. Since mothers attended with their children, at least part of each session had to be devoted to mother-child activities. Similarly, childminding arrangements had to be organised to occupy the children for those parts of the meeting devoted to discussions. Much of the meeting had to be devoted to some practical, concrete activity, such as making a toy, and not just to 'talk'. This is what the mothers valued most. The mothers attending these group meetings usually became involved in other group activities at the centres. Not least in importance, the parent-run cooperative day care programme developed out of these groups of EMRA mothers.

When the Ofakim *Community Education Project* ended in December 1983, the EMRA home visiting programme was taken over by the municipality. By 1987 it was evident that in the nine years of intensive home intervention (with most families participating in the programme for at least a year and about a third continuing for a second year) a high proportion of the target population had been reached. In 1988, as sources of funding dried up, the local authority decided to discontinue the programme.

Morasha: EMRA, continuation and new directions

The developmental history of the EMRA home visiting programme in Morasha illuminates the process of dissemination and project development within the Van Leer project network. On the one hand, it provides evidence that new projects do not need to rediscover the wheel, and that activities developed in other projects may well offer an adequate response to the needs of their community. On the other hand, it illustrates that by combining continuity with change, introduced by sensitive staff in response to specific needs and problems, a 'second generation' version of the basic programme can develop which is relevant to present-day and local realities.

A neighbourhood profile of Morasha[2] compiled by the Renewal Department of the Jewish Agency in 1982 included the following demographic data:

> 60 per cent of the adult population had completed eight or less years of schooling;
>
> 80 per cent of the women were not employed outside the home;
>
> many problems related to the family, such as large families with limited coping skills and multiple problems, malfunctioning young families and broken homes;
>
> children entered the formal educational system ill-prepared, parents did not understand the need to participate in their children's education and had no awareness of their children's needs;

the community, both adults and children, suffered from a low self-image which negatively affected the children's development;

much of the community was passive and made little use of available services.

This is a classic profile of a disadvantaged community, exacerbated by the proximity of one of Israel's wealthiest communities, whose school system they shared. (The Morasha neighbourhood is part of the municipality of Ramat Hasharon, in the greater Tel Aviv area.)

Programme development: beginnings

The EMRA home visiting programme developed in Ofakim was adopted in order to reach out to families with children aged zero to three considered to be 'at risk' and provide them with enrichment and stimulation. However, the programme was careful to avoid stigmatisation, and advertised itself as a programme for families resident in Morasha, with at least one child under the age of three and a mother not working outside the home. (A different programme was designed to meet the needs of working mothers).

For the first two years, it developed more or less along the lines of the original EMRA prototype, with some minor changes. The para-professional counsellors underwent similar training and worked with a similar caseload of eight to ten families. During their first year families were visited once weekly; in their second year, this was reduced to every two weeks. Time allocation was more flexible than in the prototype, with allowance made for extra support in times of crisis.

Group work with mothers proved to be less successful, and evaluation indicated that the counsellors were not convinced of the importance of this aspect of the programme; while highly committed to their work as home visitors, their understanding of the community development goals of the project left much to be desired. This led to a reappraisal of the project's mode of operation, and to the beginning of a number of significant structural changes.

Introducing changes

Greater emphasis began to be placed, in initial and in-service training, on the para-professional's role as a community change agent. The counsellors began to play a more active advocacy role between the families under their guidance and the various community services, helping the families to make better use of services. They received training in planning and became more active in decision making and evaluation, working with the evaluator to define objectives for change for the families concerned and criteria for evaluation of their own performance. All of this helped to increase their competence, self-esteem and ability to function autonomously.

The major structural change introduced was to combine home visiting with other educational tasks in the community. The individual home visiting caseload was reduced to five or six families, and each counsellor undertook to spend half her time on one or more additional tasks: parent guidance in the pediatric clinic, enrichment activities in the family day care centres, organising creativity workshops for four and five year olds and their parents, and conducting games and story-telling sessions at the local public library.

In 1986, as the first phase of the *Early Childhood and Family Development* project drew to a close, another major assessment was made. It became apparent that the mothers participating in the EMRA programme were not a homogeneous group; there were differences in socio-economic status, age, education, number of children and their ages, level of family functioning, and other particulars. Each group had its own needs and problems; for example, mothers with a first baby were sometimes in need of intensive encouragement and instruction during the first two or three months; mothers pregnant for a second time needed guidance in preparing the first child for the birth of a sibling; families with multiple problems, or with children at risk, needed more frequent visits.

New directions

The new design of the EMRA programme which emerged is modular in structure, comprising units of three to four months each. From this 'menu', an individual programme is chosen together with the mother to fit her needs.

The project invites all mothers in the community with a first baby to participate in a short term programme (up to three months after birth) to assist the inexperienced mother to overcome the difficulties arising during this period – the physical care of the infant, breast feeding, organising the home and the mother's routine, and preparing for a return to work. Following this period, mothers are encouraged to join group activities.

Mothers pregnant with a second child may receive guidance and support in a variety of contexts: if the mother is already participating in the EMRA programme, she is invited to join a group focused on how to prepare the first-born child for the birth of the new baby, how to cope with the child's jealousy later, and so forth. If she is new to the programme, she may also participate in the home visiting programme for a period of three months to a year, combining home visits and group sessions.

Multiple-problem families are referred to the programme by the Department of

Social Services. Problems include physical or mental handicaps, alcoholism, drug addiction, poverty, unemployment, overcrowding, many children. In the past, these families were included in the regular programme and comprised some 30 per cent of the participating families. Experience showed that more intensive intervention and support was called for. Counsellors needed to provide more intensive guidance and mediate between the families and specialist agencies while also attempting to integrate the family into the community. Such families remain in the programme for one or two years, with the counsellors visiting once or twice each week.

In order to enable mothers who work outside the home, as well as interested fathers, to participate in the programme, afternoon home visits were added. This places an additional burden on the counsellors, who are themselves usually mothers of small children. (Home visiting programmes for working mothers are notoriously difficult to implement. Working women everywhere have two jobs: one outside and one in the home; especially when her children are small, the working woman has little time free for other activities until late in the evening.)

Monthly group meetings, combining a practical activity such as toy making with discussions on parenthood and related topics, are an essential component of the programme. Participation fees have been raised considerably, to make the programme more cost effective and to avoid dependence. The project prefers to subsidise those who cannot afford the cost than provide the programme almost free to those who can.

The dissemination and development process continues. The Training and Resource Centre in Morasha has undertaken training courses for para-professional counsellors for the recently established *Regional Association for Early Childhood Education, Sharon Region* under whose auspices the EMRA programme is being disseminated to the neighbouring communities of Rosh Ha'ayin and Petach Tikva. Similarly, the 'second generation' EMRA programme has been adopted by the project in Acre where it will undoubtedly undergo yet further revisions to adapt it to local needs.

S'derot: the *Nitzan* Programme

In designing its own home intervention programme, the S'derot project initially adopted the methods and approaches developed in other projects. Its individual approach emerged as it became better acquainted with the specific needs of its target population. The project's professional and para-professional staff are members of the community of S'derot and the project itself is part of a locally initiated self-help and community development scheme which has succeeded in dramatically improving the quality of life in the town. Special emphasis has been placed on the training and development of the project's para-professional counsellors, to enable them to function as autonomously as possible and to encourage them to play an active leadership role in the community.

Staff training

Training in group work and group dynamics has been especially emphasised with the aim of enhancing the para-professional counsellors' self-awareness, empathy with others, and ability to forge effective relationships. This also contributes to the building of a cohesive team. The counsellors are encouraged to be creative and resourceful and to develop their own personal style of work. The *Nitzan* programme provides basic guidelines, but they are encouraged to use their own initiative and imagination. This style of operation is also evident in the weekly staff meetings and in-service training sessions, where discussion centres on common problems and problem solving with the counsellors working independently in small groups, with the programme coordinator herself only occasionally mixing in.

In this manner, counsellors become aware that there is often more than one correct response to a problem and become adept at adapting suggestions offered by their peers, learning to function in a flexible manner appropriate to each individual family's needs.

The target families are young families, considered to be most likely to benefit from guidance concerning early childhood education. Both parents are encouraged to participate and therefore home visits take place in the afternoons as well as the mornings. Emphasis is placed on working with the parent, on the parent's interaction with the child, on his or her understanding of the educational objective of each play activity, and on the parents' own initiative in devising alternative ways of stimulating the child. Much effort has been devoted to overcoming the counsellors' initial tendency to work directly with the child.

The *Nitzan* programme for three to four year olds

One of the concerns has been provision of continuous guidance to parents until the point where the child enters the formal educational framework of the pre-kindergarten at age four.

The programme for three to four year olds is a bridge between the informal, undemanding atmosphere of the home and the demands of the formal educational system. It is designed to provide the child with the skills needed to succeed in school, and parents with the tools to help their children in this task. The programme guides parents in how to play and work with their children in general and how to teach them specific educational concepts. Parents and children participate in a group which meets at the project's Resource Centre.

East Jerusalem: the home intervention programme

The *Early Childhood and Community Education* project in the Old City of Jerusalem aims to promote parents' awareness of their children's developmental needs; to encourage them to play an active role in their children's education; to help them to use their capacities to improve their lives and thus improve their self-image.

The 'Para-professional Supervisor Mothers' Programme' – the project's home visiting programme providing guidance and support for mothers of children from birth to three years of age – fits into a comprehensive programme aimed at strengthening the family unit. Other components are individual and group work with problem families. This is the realm of the professional social workers, rather than the para-professionals, although the project has begun to train para-professional social workers to take over some of this work. Approximately half of the families involved in the project are in need of short-term or long-term social work treatment. Major problems include broken families, overcrowding, ill health, unemployment, strained marital relations and, of course, the low self-esteem, apathy and fatalism typical of disadvantaged communities.

While visiting families in the Bab Hutta and El Sa'adiah neighbourhoods during the early days of the project, the social workers often found neglected children at home and on the streets. Talking to the mothers revealed that they were unaware of the child's needs other than the basic physical ones of food and shelter. Mothers were convinced that the child only begins to learn when it is older and already attending school and provided no kind of stimuli for the child's mental and social development. Children were often left in their cribs for hours on end, without being attended or spoken to by anyone. Mothers would change the child's diapers and put it back to bed to drink its bottle, without holding it or playing with it. Some children came to the project's nursery at age 3 knowing only a few words, but mothers did not perceive this to be a problem, and expressed the belief that one should not talk to the infant in its early years. The project therefore planned a home reinforcement programme which would encourage mothers to play with their children at home and which would train the mother to understand her child's developmental needs and how to meet them.

Programme development

During 1980 and 1981 the project organised two courses for 32 mothers, focused on issues of child raising and how to make toys from scrap materials. Fifteen women were selected to take part in the first intensive para-professional training course. At first it was difficult to recruit women who had passed through the course to work in the home visiting programme as para-professional supervisor mothers. Many husbands objected to their wives working outside the home, especially if this involved going into the homes of women who were not related. Moreover, women were hesitant to visit and support other mothers in their homes. Five para-professionals were finally recruited, and work began in 1981 with 19 families and 30 children aged zero to three years.

Families were selected for the programme on the following criteria: the family had to have at least one child under the age of three, both parents had to agree to take part, and the family had to be without major social problems. (It was felt that the para-professional workers lacked the experience to handle multi-problem families.) At times, the para-professional, in regular contact with the mother, would discover problems previously unknown, or the mother herself would become aware of problems as a result of the learning process she was undergoing. In such cases, the social worker would assume a more active role.

By 1982 the home intervention programme became accepted in the neighbourhood. Every mother who registered her child for the project's pre-school programme also agreed to participate in the home visiting programme with her younger children. Mothers were encouraged to join in various courses and parents' meetings held at the Spafford Community Centre where the project is based. Work with fathers was begun to bridge the gap which had begun to appear between husband and wife as the processes of learning and change in which the women were involved began to assert themselves.

The underlying notion is to convert the process of child care into an interesting and desirable task. This can be achieved if the mother learns to understand her child and its development, if she is aware of the child's needs at each developmental stage, and if she acquires the basic skills to meet these needs and respond to difficulties as they arise.

The mode of operation

The project's social worker establishes contact with the family, registers the pre-school child for the nursery, describes the other activities to the mother, learns the background of the family and its problems, and plans a programme of work with the family. If the family is included in the home visiting programme, the social worker will match the family with a para-professional 'supervisor mother', and will take part in the first home visit.

During the mother's first year in the programme, guidance is provided once a week in the mother's home. The 'supervisor mother' brings with her toys and books from the project's outreach library, and demonstrates how to play with the children and how to respond to them while the mother observes. The home visitor also explains the function and importance of the toys in meeting the child's developmental needs at each stage. On some visits, the home visitor works with the mother on preparing toys from materials found around the house.

The home visitor also brings with her written materials which serve as the basis for individual counselling and guidance. These materials, which are left with the mother, provide practical advice on methods of relating to and communicating with the child and on problems of child care. Oral communication with the child is emphasised. The materials also guide the mother towards understanding her child's feelings and relating to them sensitively. They also counsel the mother on matters such as praising or scolding, encouraging self-expression, independence and responsibility, stubbornness, thumbsucking, bedwetting, lying, fears.

Mothers also participate in small group counselling sessions every two weeks. These meetings provide the opportunity to become acquainted with other mothers and a setting in which mothers can discuss different methods of handling their children, the pros and cons of each approach and its suitability at different stages of development. Mothers acquire self-confidence, learn to accept and understand each other, and are able to derive satisfaction from giving and taking.

In the second year, home visits are reduced to every two weeks; in the third year, they take place once a month, with the small group meetings continuing every two weeks. Gradually group work replaces individual counselling. Mothers also attend monthly parents' meetings. Although originally limited to mothers with a child in the project's pre-school programme, new mothers of infants are now also participating.

Evaluation shows that the mothers' awareness of their children's developmental needs had perceptibly increased, as had their awareness of the importance of toys, books, and so on. Parents tended to provide toys and books for their children, whether by buying them or borrowing them from the toy library at the project's Outreach Centre.

The most dramatic effects of the programme can be seen in the para-professional supervisor mothers themselves. Originally hesitant and unsure of themselves, they have acquired a high degree of self-confidence and self-esteem; both they and their husbands (who in some cases initially opposed the idea) take pride in their work; many of the women see their role as a means to their own self-actualisation. Many have developed administrative and leadership skills which find outlets in other programmes in the project and in voluntary activity in the community.

Beta Yisrael: home visiting in a community of new immigrants

The community of *Beta Yisrael* – Ethiopian Jews who immigrated to Israel in recent years – shares some of the problems and needs of other disadvantaged communities in Israel. However, to these one must add the specific problems of refugee immigrants. Their journey to Israel took place under extremely traumatic conditions in the course of which families were broken up and the fabric of traditional community life forever destroyed. This experience left the Ethiopian immigrants with a deep sense of personal loss; it also deprived them of a culturally meaningful frame of reference. This profoundly unsettling experience often entailed a loss of role and a sense of powerlessness which is passed on by parents to their children. The children, adapting with greater ease to the new culture, are caught between conflicting expectations and conflicting loyalties. The effect on family life is deeply upsetting. The home environment often becomes unstable and insecure.

The *Beta Yisrael* project thus faces a number of unique challenges. As well as working to improve the educational environment of the young child the project strives to assist the integration of the *Beta Yisrael* community into the general population, while encouraging it to preserve its own culture and traditions. The project is both change agent and agent of acculturation. It introduces new coping skills while reinforcing survival skills. And to an even greater degree than elsewhere, it must avoid the temptation of 'getting things done' efficiently by doing them for people. It must foster self-help even as people demand to have things done for them.

Early experience

In traditional *Beta Yisrael* society girls were married soon after puberty. As a result, many young mothers are no older than 17 or 18. In the traditional culture, the young mother could count on the support of the extended family. In Israel she is often alone, without even her own mother to turn to. In the traditional society, children spent their infancy on their mothers' backs, but were expected to be independent as soon as they were able to walk. In the absorption centres where the Ethiopian immigrants spent their first months in Israel, infants and toddlers were placed in crèches to free mothers for study and job training. This was interpreted as meaning that in Israel, child care was the responsibility of the state. After moving out of the absorption centres, mothers discovered that day care was no longer freely available. This is but one example of the cultural confusion generated by the immigrant experience and led the project to the conclusion that 'the home visiting programme is an essential vehicle for addressing the multitude of cultural shocks that young Ethiopian parents face in their absorption into Israeli Society'.[3]

The stated objectives of the home visiting programme are:

allowing the parent to design the home visit according to her own and her child's specific needs;

acquainting the parent with parenting resources that are not readily accessible in the home environment (such as toys, Israeli children's songs, Israeli foods, books, and so on.);

acquainting the parent with the advantages offered by existing facilities (nutrition counselling, Well-baby Clinic, Citizens Rights Bureau, etc.) and 'de-mystifying' their activities (such as inoculations) and those of the surrounding Israeli culture;

helping the parent to choose and make appropriate toys for her child;

helping the parent to integrate old and new, adopting new patterns of functioning while retaining traditional cultural elements.

Mode of operation

The home visiting programme, deliberately low-key, supportive and non-directive, casts the home visitor in the role of 'a friend in the community'. It encourages parents to chose the agenda for the home visit, trusting in the family's ability to provide effective parenting when it has the appropriate information and resources at its disposal. The programme focuses on nutrition and health as well as on child development issues. This is intended to counteract parents' feelings of powerlessness and to increase their confidence in their native Ethiopian parenting skills while encouraging them to include Israeli parenting styles in ways that they find comfortable.

In addition, the home visiting programme works with other agencies serving the families, such as the Well-baby Clinic, the Health Service Clinic and the social welfare and absorption agencies in each neighbourhood.

Training

The *Beta Yisrael* project, for self-evident reasons, has had to commit greater resources and efforts to the training of indigenous para-professional counsellors than is the case in other projects. After completion of the initial training course, which entails 70 hours of study, the para-professional trainees chosen to work as counsellors in the home visiting programme participate in an additional one month course, which deals with such topics as nutrition, health, services in the community, mother-child relations and child development.

The preparation of 'curriculum' units and culturally relevant written and illustrated materials has been essential in developing a programme to fit con- ditions of work in what is, in effect, uncharted territory. Continuous feedback from the field has shaped the design of appropriate content. Curriculum units deal with topics such as childcare and development, safety in the home, nutrition, neighbourhood resources, preventive health care, language development and breastfeeding. Toys – a new concept for many of the parents – play an important role, whether in the form of learning to make toys or borrowing one from the programme's toy-lending library.

REFERENCES TO CHAPTER SEVEN

1 Namir, L. (Ed.). *Step by Step and Side by Side* – activity guide for parent and child from birth to age three, by developmental stages (Hebrew). Kibbutz Hameuchad Publishing House Ltd. 1985

2 Neighbourhood profile of Morasha compiled by Renewal Department of the Jewish Agency in 1982

3 *Beta Yisrael* project proposal, phase 2 (Hebrew)

CHAPTER EIGHT

The nuts and bolts of intervention: programmes outside the home

Continuing our examination of those programmes which constitute the 'nuts and bolts' of the community education project, we look in this chapter at some of the many programmes which have been developed for parents and children in a number of different settings outside the home. These by no means exhaust the totality of project initiatives and, rather than striving for comprehensiveness, the programmes highlighted are those which have taken root and flowered. While retaining a basic common core, they have been adapted to the specific conditions and needs of each community. It is this element of flexibility which gives the programmes their vitality and vibrancy.

Clinic-based parent guidance and child stimulation programmes

Israel has a well-developed system of Well-baby Clinics, run by the Ministry of Health, which reaches practically every family with small children. Mothers first attend the clinics for pre-natal care; after they give birth, they bring their infants to the clinics at regular intervals for inoculations and checkups (this care continues until age three). Similarly, over 80 per cent of the population belongs to the *Kupat Holim* Health Fund of the *Histadrut*, the General Federation of Labour, and uses its clinics. In some communities these two systems – the first concerned primarily with the preventive, the second with the curative side of health care – provide joint pediatric services; in others, they maintain separate clinics. To establish direct contact with the greatest possible number of parents of small children in a community, there is no better place to than the pediatric clinic.

Attending a clinic often entails prolonged periods of boredom and discomfort while waiting one's turn in a crowded ante-room – a situation particularly trying for small children and the adults who accompany them. At the same time, the waiting rooms of the pediatric clinics serve as an involuntary meeting place for parents and their small children, providing both the setting and the 'captive audience' for working with parents on educational activities and playing with their children.

Almost all of the Foundation-supported projects in Israel have taken advantage of the clinic setting to reach out to parents and young children. Clinic-based activities often provide the initial stimulus and point of entry into the more structured and intensive early childhood education programmes offered by the projects. However, in some cases, the clinic is the only source of educational guidance for mothers of infants and toddlers.

Cooperation between professionals and para-professionals

Clinic-based programmes offer an opportunity for cooperation between professionals and para-professionals. The clinics' professional medical staff often refer mothers and their children to the para-professional counsellor in charge of the stimulation and guidance corner for individual attention and advice on childrearing and development. Mothers are more at ease with the indigenous para-professional who speaks their language than with the professional from outside the community and from a higher socio-economic stratum. As a result, the para-professional often plays the role of confidante and go-between with the professional staff.

Space, the degree of crowding and the frequency of visits are all variables which determine the nature of the play and guidance corners and how they work. All have toys, books and play materials, as well as rugs, tables and chairs for the children to enable them to spend the waiting time in constructive play. This reduces tension and anxiety (some children even insist on visiting the clinic in order to play with the toys!). However, working with parents under these conditions is much more difficult and challenging.

Play repertoire

In Ofakim a 'play-repertoire', consisting of a variety of home-made toys, puzzles, games and play materials, was developed. The para-professional counsellors became expert in explaining and demonstrating these to the parents. Each counsellor prepared home-made toys, such as mobiles, hand puppets, home-made books, matching and sorting games, and others, which parents were encouraged to make from scrap and inexpensive materials available at cost price while waiting. The counsellors utilised these toy-making sessions to discuss the educational function of each toy, the importance of play in the child's development, and any other issue raised by the parent. Books on parenting, child development, pregnancy and childbirth, as well as the project's own educational materials and various pamphlets on health education topics provided by the health services were available in each play and guidance corner. Repeated requests led to the establishment of small lending libraries in each clinic, from which books could be borrowed in exchange for a small deposit. Parents began to perceive the counsellors as resource people to whom they could turn for advice and guidance on how to deal with the problems they encountered in raising their children, as well as on such intimate matters as birth control and marital relations.

In Merchavim, a region of rural settlements, mothers come at regular intervals to the regional Well-baby clinics for checkups and inoculations. Since transportation is provided by the Regional Council to and from the clinics, small groups of women and small children arrive together at the clinic and leave only when all of them have completed their examinations. Under these circumstances the counsellor is able to meet individually with each mother to discuss issues of childrearing and offer guidance on how best to stimulate her child's development. The child's progress is monitored by the counsellor who keeps records of these sessions. Counselling is also provided for pregnant women: young women expecting their first child often find it easier to discuss their anxieties with the para-professional counsellor than with the nurse.

The Motherhood programme developed in East Jerusalem also takes advantage of the Well-baby clinic to provide individual guidance. This programme covers the child's development throughout seven developmental stages and deals with 19 different subjects, including nutrition, hygiene and health care. Mothers pay a token sum to participate in the programme, which helps defray the cost of the written materials which they receive at each visit. The para-professional counsellor keeps an individual file on each family and monitors the progress of the child.

The Developmental Play Corner run by the *Beta Yisrael* project in the Well-baby clinic serving the Beersheva neighbourhood in which the project is based, is in many ways similar. The corner is staffed by a joint team of an Ethiopian and a non-Ethiopian para-professional. The Ethiopian para-professional is often called upon to act as translator – both literally, and in the trans-cultural sense – and mediator between the Ethiopian immigrant mother and the medical staff of the clinic.

Family day-care centres

The Family Day Care Centre programme in Morasha illustrates the fact that successful innovations in education often involve the redesign of existing programmes rather than the introduction of brand new ones. The basic Family Day Care Centre model was originally developed by the MATNAS Community Centres Association and the Ministry of Labour and Welfare as an alternative to traditional day care centres. Local women were trained in basic child care skills and authorised to open privately run but publicly supervised Family Day Care Centres in their own homes. Working mothers who enrolled their children were entitled to subsidies equivalent to those of the regular day care centres. Only five children were enrolled in each centre, giving a much better caregiver to child ratio than that found in the traditional day care centres. Moreover, the system provided work for local women, enabling them to make a significant contribution to the family income.

The Family Day Care Centre model was originally adopted by the project in Morasha in response to the urgent need for day care facilities in the community, and to enable mothers to work outside the home. Adapting the model to fit the community, the project introduced parental involvement and provided for extensive initial training and continuous in-service training for the para-professional caregivers.

The Centres are run by graduates of the project's para-professional training course, with regular in-service training and monthly workshops and study days organised by the project's Training and Resource Centre. Particular emphasis is placed on working with parents and active parent involvement is encouraged.

The Family Day Care Centre programme is highly cost-effective. The project provides the basic play equipment, training and supervision. Otherwise, each Centre is financially independent: the caregivers are self-employed, their salary and all operating expenses are covered by the fees paid by the parents (which are regulated by the Ministry of Labour and Welfare) and by government subsidies. (By law, working women are entitled to subsidised day care; the project successfully lobbied for the extension of these entitlements to women employed as domestic servants). At present, some 80 per cent of the mothers are gainfully employed outside the home – in itself a revolution in this community, and a development which has considerably contributed not only to family welfare but to the women's positive self-image.

A study conducted by the project's evaluator[1] compared children in regular day care centres to those in Family Day Care. The latter were found to engage more frequently in purposeful and self-directed activity, to be more active and responsive and to interact more frequently with the caregivers. Family Day Care was also found to be more accessible. Kindergarten teachers working with the programme's 'graduates' reported that these children entered the kindergarten with better play and work habits than children raised at home or in standard day care centres.

An effective response to severe deprivation

Family Day Care Centres have also been introduced by the *Arab Communities* project in Lod, as a response to problems of severe deprivation there. Five such centres function as substitute homes during the day for children whose own home environment exerts a negative influence on their development. Some of the children enrolled in these centres suffer from malnutrition and physical neglect; some from difficulties in cognitive development and verbal abilities; some children came to the centre not knowing how to play with toys. The initial task facing the caregivers at the centres is thus to restore the children to health and physical well-being, as well as attending to their developmental and educational needs.

The Family Day Care Centres in Lod are run by local women trained as para-professional caregivers by the project. A high level of professional knowledge and skill is called for to deal with the problems of these children from multi-problem families. The programme's professional supervisor is key in assuring the success of the programme. She is responsible for continuing contact and liaison with the children's families, as well as guiding and supervising the work of the para-professionals, helping them to solve problems that arise in their work, and providing them with in-service training.

Children return home every afternoon at four and it has been noted that many of them, once they accustom themselves to the Family Day Care Centre, are reluctant to return home. There is a need to work intensively with the family itself, especially the mother. Mothers are required to take turns working in the Family Day Care Centre for a few hours each week. This rota gives the mother the opportunity to observe her child's behaviour and makes her aware of the positive changes which have taken place in the child and the reasons for this change.

The Family Day Care Centres have proven themselves to be effective as a framework for helping children suffering from severe deprivation to develop and function in a normal manner.

Parent-run cooperative nurseries

Despite the widespread availability of day care for children up to age three, it provides at best a partial answer to the need for early childhood educational frameworks. Traditional day care centres were designed to cater to the needs of the working mother. However, they fail to meet the needs of housewives and women in part-time employment, or those of their children. The high cost of day care places it beyond the reach of all but those mothers in full-time employment, who are entitled to subsidies which defray part of the cost. Traditional day care centres have other drawbacks: large groups permit little individual attention, child-adult ratios are high, and caregivers are often inadequately trained and underqualified. The traditional day care centre cannot foster effective parent involvement – nor is it convinced of the importance of such involvement. On the contrary, parents are usually discouraged from displaying too avid an interest, and attempts to become involved are often regarded as interference.

Most children up to the age of three in families where the mother does not work outside the home are not involved in any educational structure. Often such mothers are also the least aware of their children's developmental needs and least equipped to meet them.

The parent-run cooperative nursery offers a solution to several problems in that:

> it provides an inexpensive educational facility within the means of most families;
>
> it fosters parents' awareness of their children's developmental and educational needs, and provides a context within which the parent is able to acquire the skills and knowledge needed to foster the child's development;
>
> it provides an effective educational and peer group setting for the child;
>
> it constitutes a natural support group for young parents, who often suffer from social isolation;
>
> it frees mothers part of the time from their parenting role, enabling them to develop their own potential through other activities, study or part-time employment;
>
> it fosters the development of collective solutions to community problems.

Parent-run cooperative nurseries have been established in a variety of settings – community centres, neighbourhood air-raid shelters, empty class-rooms in schools, private houses, or unused kindergarten or day care centre facilities. These nurseries are most suitable for children aged between eighteen months and three years.

Neighbourhood-based nurseries

Ofakim was the first project to experiment with parent-run cooperative nurseries. The model developed there was that of the neighbourhood-based cooperative playgroup, involving some 15 to 20 mothers and toddlers, meeting five days each week for four hours at the project's neighbourhood centres. Three such groups were established, one in each centre, each organised and led by a trained para-professional counsellor, with two mothers on rota each day. All mothers participated in a week-long orientation course and met every two weeks. The cost of play materials and refreshments was covered by fees paid. Each day, one of the mothers on rota prepared breakfast for all the children and brought it with her to the centre.

Both the S'derot and the Morasha projects introduced parent-run cooperative nurseries into their programmes. In both cases, the nursery is staffed by a permanent para-professional counsellor, with one or two mothers on duty each day. Parents pay a monthly fee, which covers the cost of the counsellor's salary and running expenses. They take part in a preliminary training course of three to four days duration, and participate in regular parents' meetings and in-service training sessions. Mothers are encouraged to spend at least one morning weekly on their own self-development and in community-based activities.

Introduction to different concepts

In the *Beta Yisrael* project, the cooperative nursery helps to introduce the Ethiopian immigrant mother to Israeli patterns of childcare in a culturally respectful manner. The mothers' initial contact with conventional early childhood educational frameworks in the absorption centres served to emphasise the gap between their own culture and that of the absorbing society. The day care centres in which the children were placed made little attempt to teach the mothers Israeli concepts of childrearing; while mothers were – perhaps unintentionally – made to feel that their way of raising children was inadequate. No provision existed for teaching them new ways. Once their children entered the formal school system, the gap between home and school became even wider. The parent-run cooperative nursery, bridging the gap between home and school, parent and teacher, counteracts the negative effect of this initial experience, and introduces the parent to different concepts which extend beyond the confines of early childhood education.

The nurseries introduce the parents to Israeli norms and concepts of childcare by precept and example – by modelling appropriate behaviour – and by means of the guidance each parent receives when he or she comes to work at the nursery on rota. In addition, other activities provide both formal and informal opportunities for parent involvement. These include periodic parents meetings and workshops; individual discussions with the primary caregiver of the child's group on the child's development or experiences in the group; birthday parties, holiday celebrations and outings. Parents play an active role in decision making. The project has sought to integrate the cooperative nurseries by opening its doors to neighbourhood residents who wish to enroll their children, and a number of non-Ethiopian families have joined.

The children themselves are the best witnesses to the effectiveness of the programme. Their cleanliness and personal hygiene demonstrate improvement in routine care. Much effort has been invested in improving the families' nutritional habits (unwillingness to eat unfamiliar food had created problems of unbalanced diets and even malnutrition) and here too changes have become apparent. The children's language skills have improved remarkably, as have their play and learning habits.

Community-based pre-school provision

In Israel, compulsory and free public education begins at five years of age with enrolment in the kindergarten. There is free pre-school provision for three and four year olds established by the Ministry of Education and Culture in communities and neighbourhoods officially designated as 'disadvantaged'. The communities falling into this category are primarily development towns and depressed urban neighbourhoods. Other communities – more prosperous city suburbs and towns, *kibbutzim* and veteran *moshavim*, and almost all Arab villages, towns and city neighbourhoods – have had to make their own private arrangements for the education of three and four year olds. The lack of statutory pre-school provision has been most sorely felt in the poorer communities in the Arab sector.

The pre-school programme in the Old City, Jerusalem

The first programme developed by the project in the Old City of Jerusalem was the pre-school programme for three to five year olds. Families came from the lowest socio-economic strata; their children suffered from severe deprivation, entering the school system unprepared and lacking in basic cognitive skills. Often they completed their formal education as functional illiterates. Parents accepted this situation passively. The immediate purpose served by the two pre-school classes opened by the project in 1979 was to remove the children from the alleys and streets and bring them into a healthier and more stimulating environment. The project developed a comprehensive pre-school programme which included teacher training, curriculum development and systematic parent involvement and participation in the education of their children. It is misleading to discuss the pre-school programme in isolation, since it is just one, albeit a central, component of a more comprehensive family and community intervention effort intended to effect far-ranging changes in the child's immediate environment.

All members of the staff – teachers, social workers, and women with prior experience in childcare chosen to work in the pre-school – participated in a two-year, 800 hour training course. The course curriculum covered a wide range of topics relevant to the programme, such as family and group dynamics and community work. Underlying the course structure was the policy that work with children cannot be limited to the child alone, but must relate needs to the family as a whole, who must be regarded as partners in the endeavour.

By 1987, the pre-school consisted of five classes, in which 125 children were enrolled. The children attended the pre-school every morning for four hours. The daily schedule comprises free play in the various activity corners; outdoor activities: sand play, play equipment, and so on; group activities: songs, monthly themes, dance, and so on; creative activities, small group work on concepts; and a mid-morning snack. The project has developed its own pre-school curriculum and teaching aids, and published a guide in Arabic for pre-school teachers.

No less important than the curriculum is the didactic approach. Children are encouraged to function independently, to express themselves freely in play, to develop their individual interests, as well as participate in group activity and cooperate with other children. Educational games teach the child colours, shapes, association and coordination. Children are assigned to classes according to their developmental level rather than their chronological age. Children from the same family stay together in the same class, thus providing continuity with the home environment.

Participation by mothers

The duty roster allows the mother to familiarise herself with the pre-school and its work, to observe her child in the process of learning new concepts through play, to play with him or her and to acquire new concepts herself. This reinforces the mother's self-confidence and strengthens the child's relationship with her.

Teachers devote one afternoon weekly to home visits. This enables them to learn about the child's home environment, to understand the family situation and to gain the confidence and cooperation of the family. The problems of specific children and their families are discussed at staff meetings in which the project's social workers participate. All the staff cooperate in working together with the family of children with severe problems. All aspects of work in the pre-school are discussed in weekly staff meetings. Parents attend monthly parents meetings, which are usually devoted to discussion of the problems parents encounter, methods of relating effectively to their children, and other issues of concern to parents.

The pre-school education programme developed in East Jerusalem serves as a model for other Arab communities in Israel. Under the auspices of the *Trust for Early Childhood, Family and Community Education Programmes*, pre-school teachers have been trained and pre-schools opened in a number of towns and villages. As in the East Jerusalem project, parent and community involvement are essential components.

The role of the Trust in propagating pre-school education cannot be overestimated. Training pre-school educators is at best problematic. No adequate provision exists in Israel for training pre-school teachers. Teachers' colleges train kindergarten teachers (who are ill-equipped for working with the three or four year olds); nor do training courses for nursery nurses fill the bill. The situation is even more difficult in the Arab sector, where early childhood education is a relatively new development.

The Trust, assuming direct responsibility for training teachers for pre-school centres and providing continuing guidance, in-service training and supervision, has broken new ground and made a major contribution towards the development of community-based pre-school education in the Arab sector.

Enrichment and activity centres

For children from disadvantaged families the street usually serves as playground – the place where they spend most of their time after school and during holidays. Homes are often overcrowded and ill equipped to meet the child's needs; toys, games and books are sorely lacking, and parents are unaware of the importance of play and creative activity for the child's development. It is thus not surprising that the Foundation-supported projects have attempted to answer these needs by providing a physical base for after-school activity and a programme of stimulating and enriching activities.

Ofakim: neighbourhood family centres

In Ofakim, the neighbourhood family centres established by the project, catered in the mornings to the needs of mothers and small children, and in the afternoons were open to neighbourhood children between the ages of three and eight. From the age of three, children could come to the centre unattended by a parent, as often and for as long as they wished, though parents were encouraged to come and participate in the activities.

The centres' activities were guided by an educational philosophy which encourages self-initiated activity, independent problem solving, cooperation and responsibility. The centres provided a wide range of play and enrichment activities: a well-equipped reading and listening corner; areas for creative play (painting, collage, clay modelling, drawing); an area for imaginative play; games, puzzles and didactic toys; a puppet theatre; building blocks, trucks and wagons; sand and water play; a carpenter's bench, and so forth. Children were encouraged to move from activity to activity at their own pace. A short period at the end of each play session was given over to organised group activities: games, pantomime, songs and rhymes, story-telling, and impromptu theatrical performances.

Activities at the centres were child-centred, non-directive and non-achievement oriented. The mixed age group attending the centres – ranging in age from toddlers who came with their parents to first and second graders – posed no problem: children gravitated naturally towards those activities of most interest to them while older children often played with and helped the younger ones. An average of 40 to 50 children attended each centre daily. Each centre was staffed by two para-professional counsellors. Their presence was low-key, they were involved in the children's activities, helping when needed, but not interfering in or directing their activities. The counsellors were also responsible for liaison with the families, and periodically visited the children's homes.

Parents were encouraged to visit the centres together with their children and to take advantage of the wide variety of toys, books and materials available in order to play with their children. However, few took advantage of this opportunity.

Variations: Merchavim and S'derot

A similar programme was developed in the *moshavim* in the Merchavim region. There the programme provides the only organised activity for young children after school hours. The centres operate in whatever site can be made available: an unused nursery, a room in the local community hall, or even the local kindergarten which does not operate in the afternoons. The centres operate along the lines developed in Ofakim with one major difference: almost all of the children in the relevant age group attend each session. The pattern varies, depending on the number of children in the *moshav*. The centres are usually open three afternoons weekly. In some *moshavim*, all of the children attend all the time; in others, special days are set aside for the older children. Each centre is staffed by two trained para-professional counsellors, who are themselves usually members of the *moshav*. The counsellors also periodically visit the children's homes to discuss the child's progress with the parents.

An innovative variation on the afternoon activity and enrichment centre has been developed by the project in S'derot. The Maoz Creativity Centre, based at the Maoz Primary School, provides joint activities for parents and children attending the school two afternoons weekly. Parent volunteers take turns directing the various creativity corners. These include handicrafts (clay modelling and pottery, collage work, sewing, knitting); painting and drawing; sports (table tennis, soccer, basketball); carpentry and bicycle repair; listening corner (cassette recorder, earphones, recorded stories); computer and educational games.

The programme furthers a number of objectives: it encourages children and parents to engage together in enjoyable and productive activity on an equal basis; it strengthens parents' involvement and ties to the school, which is used as a community resource, and it provides a stimulating environment for children in the after-school hours.

Acre: the storefront centre

The Activity and Resource Centre established by the project in Acre introduced a new concept in Israel: the centrally-located storefront centre, with its implied invitation to drop in and take part. Located in a tiny 'shopping complex' in the heart of the Wolfson neighbourhood, next door to the project's offices, it is ideally situated to become a key focal point for neighbourhood activities. It serves as the physical base for a variety of different activities to meet the needs of different segments of the project's target population. Beyond this similarity, the Activity and Resource Centre has developed its own unique programme and mode of operation.

The Centre has made maximum use of every available inch of space: from floor to ceiling, the walls are covered with shelves holding the centre's collection of educational resources: story books for children of various ages and books on education and related topics for their parents in Hebrew and in Arabic; didactic games, puzzles and toys, colour-coded for different age groups; a computer and varied audio-visual equipment; materials and tools for creative activities. All of the central space is occupied by child-sized tables and chairs.

Both the schedule and the mode of operation of the Activity Centre is highly structured, reflecting in part the constraints of limited space and time in which to meet the needs of many children, and in part, pedagogical principles and cultural preferences. The Centre is open five afternoons each week for three hours. Activities are organised in one hour long sessions, with each child entitled to attend two sessions per week. Children sign up for membership and pay a monthly fee of 10 Israeli shekels; they may also pay per session. Three days each week are devoted to games, to listening to taped stories in the listening corner, and to use of the library. Two days are devoted to story-telling and creative activities. Despite the structured nature of the activities – and perhaps, because of it – the atmosphere is warm and relaxed; children play and work quietly in small groups, sometimes sharing a game and helping each other. Outside, the next group already waits its turn.

East Jerusalem: Sisters' programme

The Sisters' programme developed by the East Jerusalem project was developed to meet a somewhat different need. In working with mothers, the project became aware that the eldest sister of the child attending the pre-school often assumes the role of the mother in child care and child rearing, caring for the younger sibling while the mother is busy with housework or out shopping or visiting. In addition, much of the girls' free time is often spent in assisting the mother in housework, often at the expense of her own needs.

The Sisters' Programme was originally established in order to provide girls with some knowledge and understanding of the small child's development and needs and with guidance on methods of handling their younger brothers and sisters. After some time, emphasis shifted to the girls' own developmental needs. Although originally aimed at girls between the ages ten and thirteen, the age levels were altered to five to fourteen. The Sisters' Programme conducts activities five afternoons each week for three hours and for four hours on Friday mornings. Activities include home economics, supervised homework preparation, hygiene and cleanliness, sports, painting, handicrafts, music and choir, and folk-dancing. The girls participate in the activities of their choice for hour-long sessions. At the project's Outreach Centre, they may borrow books and toys and receive instruction in their use. From time to time, picnics and trips are organised. The girls are also encouraged to engage in voluntary assistance to the aged, ill and handicapped, so as to develop an ethos of cooperation, sharing and giving in addition to fulfilling their own needs and desires. Individual counselling is also available to the girls, to help them to deal with their own personal problems.

To reinforce the Sisters' Programme, the project staff has worked directly with mothers and with a Fathers' Club to sensitise the parents to the girls' needs and to help them to cope with the various problems they face in relating to their adolescent daughters.

Curriculum, resources and training

A pre-condition for the success of any community-based educational intervention is an understanding of the needs of the children, their parents, and the community. No less crucial is the perception of how these needs can best be met, for this determines the strategy of the intervention. Strategy then finds concrete expression in operational plans grounded in the reality of programmes, training schemes, 'curricula' and resources. The more innovative the scheme, the less likely it is that answers are readily at hand in usable and appropriate form. Every community education project in Israel has had to come to grips with the problem of finding, adapting, designing, translating and creating afresh these 'nuts and bolts'.

As the number of Foundation-supported projects in Israel expanded, the problem of training, resources and curricula has to a large degree been resolved. However, new challenges, rising expectations and the need to remain relevant under changing circumstances serve to make the design of training programmes and the development of curricula and resources a continuing concern.

The first two projects, in Ofakim and in East Jerusalem, both devoted considerable time and effort to resource and curriculum development and the design and implementation of training programmes which later also served other projects. In the process both established resource and training centres to meet these wider needs – a pattern that has since been followed by most of the other projects. The Outreach Centre in East Jerusalem also serves as a resource and training base for the new projects initiated by the *Trust for Early Childhood, Family and Community Education Programmes* in Arab Communities. After the transfer of the Ofakim *Community Education Project* to the Ofakim municipality, some of the staff of the project's resource and training centre went on to apply their experience to the development of a regional resource facility – the Community Education Centre at the Pinchas Sapir Regional College of the Negev. This pattern appears to be the optimal solution to the problem of curriculum and resource development and training.

East Jerusalem: the Outreach Centre

The Outreach Centre was originally established to develop educational resource materials for the project's early childhood education programmes and to serve as a resource centre for the project's home visiting programme. A toy and book lending library extended its services to families who were not participating in the home visiting programme. Other educators began to take an interest in the Centre's resources. This led the project to re-assess its original objectives and expand the resource centre so as to reach out to meet the needs of a much wider population.

A major challenge was the lack of educational materials in Arabic concerned with the early years. No less severe was the lack of developmental stimulus in the children's home environment.

To meet these needs, it was decided that the Outreach Centre would develop several components.

> A Toy and Book Library including a reference section of more than 200 books serving the needs of staff and students; a lending library of equal size, with books in Arabic on childrearing, pregnancy and childbirth, health care, child psychology and related topics for the use of parents; a children's lending library of over 400 titles; a toy lending library of some 600 toys, games and puzzles of various kinds, suited to the child's developmental needs from birth to age five and classified according to developmental stages.
>
> An Educational Aids Library to help staff and others further their professional growth through training and developing educational materials.
>
> A capacity for developing didactic materials in Arabic for use by para-professional counsellors and mothers in the project's home intervention programme and in Well-baby clinics as well as practical guides for the pre-school educator. A number of works on early childhood education have been translated into Arabic; slides and film strips have been developed and educational slides and film strips produced elsewhere have been translated.
>
> A Workshop which can be used to make and to repair toys used in the pre-school and the toy library which is open to the general public. Many

> items are made from scrap materials found at home; bought materials are sold at cost price.

In addition, the Outreach Centre organises study days and in-service training for staff. From the establishment of the East Jerusalem project and its extension to other Arab communities in Israel, the Outreach Centre and its staff have played an important role in training para-professional staff and providing the new projects with educational resources and materials.

Ofakim: the early childhood resource centre

Successful activities and programmes are sometimes unplanned. One of the earliest initiatives of the Ofakim project was a programme to foster parent involvement in the kindergartens. After participating for several months in a preparatory workshop, the 20-odd kindergarten teachers were sub-divided into three groups, each responsible for planning and implementing a pilot project involving parents in the kindergarten. The following year, these initial efforts developed into full-fledged projects, with each kindergarten planning a year-long programme of activities with parents: workshops to prepare didactic games, organisation of mini-lending libraries in the kindergarten, parent discussion groups, creative workshops and so forth. The teachers' initial qualms and anxieties proved far from justified.

In preparing these activities project staff became increasingly aware of the isolation in which these teachers worked: both physical, since the kindergartens were dispersed throughout the town, and psychological, since these teachers had little contact with their peers in the larger towns and were cut off from many of the resources available to the latter. The Early Childhood Resource Centre was established in 1980 to meet this newly-perceived need: to provide kindergarten and nursery teachers with didactic materials, teaching aids, and guidance in their use, as well as with a permanent site for in-service training sessions and with workshop facilities.

By 1981, the Early Childhood Resource Centre had become the meeting-place for all the kindergarten teachers in the area. The Centre's staff organised a number of study-days and workshops, in which teachers from the nearby Merchavim region also participated. Teachers came regularly to meet their colleagues, to consult with the Centre staff, to prepare didactic games and to get help in planning activities with parents. A wide range of educational resources were available at the Centre:

> some 50 home-made didactic games for children aged two to seven years, as well as instructions, materials and facilities for their construction. The games were catalogued and coded according to content and purpose: mathematical concepts, reading readiness, sensory development, and so

forth, and were used by teachers and parents. All materials were available at cost price;

a pedagogical library which included books on education, child psychology and various topics related to the kindergarten curriculum, as well as relevant periodicals;

audio-visual aids including slides, film-strips and videotapes on various subjects relevant to pre-school education;

topical displays on subjects which are part of the kindergarten curriculum, such as holidays, the seasons, reading readiness, and so on;

activity and work pages carefully selected from various sources, and classified according to the type of activity or skill they were intended to reinforce. Teachers could receive as many mimeographed copies as they wanted in return for an equivalent quantity of blank paper;

a lending library of framed reproductions of paintings for display in the kindergarten.

The Early Childhood Resource Centre became a unique and popular institution not only in the town but in the surrounding area. The workshop facilities, open twice weekly in the afternoons, began to be used by parents as well as teachers. At present, more than five years after the Community Education Project in Ofakim came to an end, the Centre is still going strong under the direction of the veteran kindergarten teacher who had worked closely with the project.

REFERENCES TO CHAPTER EIGHT

1 Lucas. Study of Morasha project. 1985

CHAPTER NINE

The third cohort: dissemination and moving to scale

As discussed in earlier chapters, the community education projects in the Van Leer network pioneered a strategy and a mode of operations which represent a new departure in early childhood education and community development in Israel. Centrally-initiated interventions, such as the Ministry of Education and Culture's Educational Welfare Project, or the more recent Project Renewal, have only too often been hamstrung by centralised control and bureaucratic procedures, inter-departmental rivalries and political pressures. As a result, they often lack the flexibility necessary for effective functioning at the local level.

On the other hand, at community level, there is usually little awareness of what can be accomplished through self-help efforts. There is even less practical experience or knowledge of how to go about creating early childhood programmes to meet local needs, enriching what exists, or improving the quality of community life in general through self-organisation. Moreover, the probability that there are people in the community with the basic training to do such things is in inverse proportion to the distance of that community from major urban centres. Yet the greater the distance, the greater the need for self-reliant effort and the less the chance that the community's potential for self-activation has been developed. The Van Leer strategy shows that we possess, at least in part, the answer to these needs. This approach is more than ever relevant in this era of shrinking resources and funds, and has led to increasing efforts to disseminate the experience to other communities and to influence policy and practice on a broader scale.

Dissemination raises new problems and an inherent dilemma. How is maximum coverage achieved without concomitant dilution of impact and intensity of effect? Is there an optimal formula? The third cohort of projects in Israel addresses these questions in the projects' effort to disseminate their experiences and to move to scale.

The Arab communities

Disadvantage in the Israeli Arab community is extensive. Moreover, the various special programmes and provision to foster the development of disadvantaged children and communities, such as the Jewish Agency-sponsored Project Renewal, have been largely confined to the disadvantaged Jewish sector. Most

Israeli Arabs live in villages and towns whose social and educational infrastructure is inadequate in the light of the needs of the population.

The vehicle for dissemination in the Arab community was the *Trust for Early Childhood, Family and Community Education Programmes*, established in 1984 and drawing on the experience of the East Jerusalem project. The stated goals of the Trust are the development of programmes to help children and adults adjust to the changes brought about by modernisation; to foster the development of local leadership, and to encourage the population's reliance on its own skills and cultural resources in developing educational and social frameworks for their children and for themselves. An initial feasibility study identified four communities for the beginning of dissemination – Abu Ghosh, Baka El Garbeya, Lod and Rahat – a sample of four different types of Arab community to be found in Israel: a village, a small town, a mixed Arab-Jewish city, and an urban settlement of Bedouin.

The common strategy in the four project locations was to work together with the local leadership and, as far as possible, within existing services and educational provisions. Local needs and priorities shaped the design of the programmes in each community. In varying combinations, these included kindergartens for three to five year olds, family day care centres for infants and toddlers, parent education and home visiting programmes, clinic-based stimulation and parent guidance corners, and health education programmes. The Trust also conducted a training programme which trained local women from these communities as paraprofessional educators and provided them with professional supervision and in-service training. Each programme emphasised the crucial role of parents, and especially mothers, in their children's education and encouraged their active involvement. Community schools were established in three of these project sites for the first time in the Arab community. These schools, established in order to cater to the educational and recreational needs of the community in general, have become the organisational hub providing the project with an operational base. The underlying concept is elegant in its simplicity.

Community schools

Even disadvantaged communities possess untapped and under-utilised resources. The most notorious of these are schools, whose gates are usually shut tight at the end of the school day, and whose facilities are inaccessible to the community whose children are educated within their walls. Using schools as a resource and focal point for community education was initially introduced in Israel by the Ministry of Education and Culture, which together with the MATNAS Association of Community Centres, initiated the Community School Project in 1968. Fifteen years later, in 1983, the nationwide project encompassed 22 community schools:

a surprisingly low number. By mid-1989 they had increased to 135 of which 35 were in the Arab sector.

The central focus of the Van Leer Foundation-supported community education projects has been early childhood education, and that perhaps accounts for the fact that their only prior effort to develop community schools was in the Community Education project in Ofakim, where two community schools operated under project auspices for a period of almost three years (see Chapter 4). The effort spearheaded by the *Trust for Early Childhood, Family and Community Education Programmes* to establish community schools in the Arab sector can be seen as a new and important departure in the field of community education and empowerment.

Base for community development

The community school at the El Zahara Arab Primary School in Lod was set up to serve as the base for a comprehensive community development programme in that town. Within the framework of the community school, activities could be organised to meet the needs of all sectors of the community. Participation would further the active involvement of citizens in their community and the community school would strengthen the relationship between the family and the educational system, thus leading to mutual reinforcement. The school's facilities and resources – building, staff, materials and tools would be used to develop programmes for all the family.

The community school in Lod is directed by the school's headmaster, assisted by an executive committee and by a staff comprised of a supervisor of activities, part-time instructors, teachers from the school itself and others brought from outside to conduct special activity groups, and a group of high-school students who work voluntarily in the community school. Activities in the community school cater to children, youth and adults. Over 200 children aged nine to thirteen receive help with homework and participate in sports and social activities. These are usually children whose homes lack proper facilities due to family problems, overcrowding, many siblings, or simply because there is no one to assist them. Yet another group of children receive special tutoring. The youth of the area come to the school in the evenings for sports and recreational activities under the supervision of a youth leader. Mothers' groups meet weekly for literacy and sewing classes; parents come to the school for lectures, social and cultural evenings and films. The school library has been expanded and opened to the community. Towards the end of the first phase of the project in 1987, the municipality of Lod agreed to assume responsibility for the continued functioning of the community school.

In Baka el Garbeya, as in Lod, two community schools were established by the project in 1986 as part of a comprehensive strategy of community education and development. Representatives of the municipality, the schools, the community centre, parents and local activists met together with representatives of the Trust to consider how to meet the varied needs of the community and how to stimulate active interest and participation in community affairs. It was decided that activities would be divided among two primary schools and the community centre, in order to cover all the residents of Baka. The programme gave high priority to activities for mothers, which were coordinated with the early childhood education project, with the social worker and the early childhood project coordinator playing a crucial role in organising the various study and activity groups, registering mothers and conducting some of the activities. The community school offered courses in sewing, home economics and art, workshops to prepare toys and games, literacy courses, discussion groups and lectures on various subjects such as child care, health, family functioning and community affairs. Further activities for adults include lectures and workshops for kindergarten teachers working in the pre-school project and sports for women. Mothers' committees are active in each of the schools and involved in planning and organising activities for women. Each school has its own 11-member public council, chaired by the school headmaster, who doubles as head of the community school.

The programme for children covers a wide range of informal educational activities: social groups, courses in Hebrew, English, computers, graphics, art and calligraphy; various sports activities, including a course in karate; tutoring and assistance in preparing lesson assignments. A group of youth counsellors, especially trained for this purpose, together with a group of teachers and several student volunteers, conduct the children's programme at the community schools. A three-week summer camp was organised by the schools and attended by 800 children.

From these promising beginnings, the community school project is moving towards the deepening and intensification of community involvement at all stages of the programme, fostering self-help, mutual aid and a spirit of voluntarism in the community.

In Rahat, a town of 17,000 in the Negev populated by Bedouin from 34 distinct clans in process of transition from a nomadic to a settled urban life style, the community school provides a common base. It facilitates the process of community building by reaching out and involving in its activities all strata in the community. The parent education programme, which is particularly directed at mothers, provides classes in home economics, health, childrearing, child development, and literacy. It is effecting a quiet revolution in the status of women in Bedouin society – yet another form of empowerment.

As the programmes move towards increasing autonomy, the Trust is able to move on to new locations and continue the dissemination of its strategy of empowerment through community education.

The Community Education Centre at the Pinchas Sapir Regional College of the Negev

The experience of working in development towns and *moshavim* made those of us involved in the effort keenly aware of the need to bring educational resources, training facilities and programmes within the reach of these communities. The establishment of a regional resource, training and dissemination centre was a natural and logical development, as was the decision to base the Centre at the Pinchas Sapir Regional College of the Negev – a community college serving the educational needs of the adult population of this area and, through its unique transport system, accessible to the most isolated communities in the region.

The Community Education Centre seeks to promote the active cooperation of family, school and community in the development of a healthy educational environment in which the child is able to thrive and develop his capacities. The Centre's basic commitment is to the democratisation of education. In keeping with that commitment, its major priority has been basic and in-service training for the unskilled and semi-skilled early childhood caregivers and educators in the communities of the region, while providing opportunities for the continuation of learning and the upgrading of skills for educators at all levels. The Centre organises training courses, workshops and seminars in various aspects of early childhood education, family life and community development for professional and para-professional educators and parents; develops, collects and disseminates educational materials and learning aids, and provides a variety of professional support services.

Responding to the needs of communities demands considerable flexibility. The Centre staff make a point of not rejecting requests for training, guidance or support, even when this entails considerable difficulty, such as driving for several hours to the central Negev to provide in-service training.

A partial listing of the Centre's training activities includes the following:

basic training courses and in-service training for para-professionals
basic training courses for qualified nursery nurses
in-service refresher courses and on-site training programmes for day care centre caregivers
advanced courses for day care centre caregivers
basic training courses and in-service training for kindergarten teachers' aides
accredited refresher courses for kindergarten teachers

orientation courses and in-service training for parents and caregivers in parent-run cooperative nurseries
evening courses for parents and educators

The Centre's Early Childhood Learning and Resource Centre provides early childhood educators, parents, trainers and students with educational resources and facilities: toys and activities for infants and toddlers; didactic games and teaching aids for pre-school children; audio-visual materials (slides, videotapes, films and audio cassettes); educational periodicals and a reference library.

The Centre organises workshops for participants in the training courses, for project staff and for early childhood caregivers, educators and parents. The Centre is also a drop-in centre for educators and parents who come to browse, get advice, or to prepare games and displays of their own.

The Centre has produced a series of booklets dealing with a wide variety of topics: the seasons of the year, holidays, summer vacation, birthday celebrations, and so on; as well as a bibliography of stories, poems and songs with related didactic materials for use in the kindergartens. Teachers are encouraged to contribute their own ideas and innovations and share them with others

The Regional Association for Early Childhood, Sharon Region

Towards the end of 1986, it was decided to disseminate the community-based early childhood programmes developed in the *Early Childhood and Family Development* project in Morasha in the Sharon region of central Israel. A regional association was established for that purpose. Negotiations with the municipalities of Petach Tikvah and Rosh Ha'ayin led to early childhood projects in each of these communities, staffed by para-professionals trained by the Association. It is sought to intensify parental involvement at all levels. A regional Community and Education Training Centre has been established, in which parents play an active role. In each of the three communities Morasha, Petach Tikva and Rosh Ha'ayin a local Association for Early Childhood Education has been set up, to be responsible for project planning and management. These voluntary associations also function in an advocacy and fundraising role. The ultimate aim is that each community will develop its own community-based early childhood education programme.

The Association of Van Leer projects in Israel

In 1986, the network of Van Leer Projects in Israel formed themselves into an association in order to further the dissemination of the work of the projects and the empowerment strategies which had proven themselves to be effective. The dissemination strategies so far discussed had presented two major shortcomings.

The strategy adopted by the *Trust for Early Childhood, Family and Community Education Programmes* and the *Regional Association for Early Childhood* in the Sharon Region, through their direct involvement at the grassroots level, held out the best promise for dissemination of the community empowerment process but the multiplication factor involved was low and the initial cost of every new intervention high. The strategy adopted by the Community Education Centre at the Negev Regional College was more cost-effective and promised wider coverage but its impact at the community level depended on the degree of awareness and motivation of educators and administrators in the various communities and its own ability to 'market its product'.

The dilemma remained: how to disseminate the achievements, how to move to size, without diluting the 'message'? It was generally agreed that this was possible only by working with and through existing national bodies in the field of education and community development, statutory or otherwise. It was also evident that one could not simply walk onto someone else's turf and assert 'My way of doing things is better than yours, why not try it?' and expect to be invited in. The name 'Van Leer', conjuring up visions of multinational wealth, was not particularly helpful, creating the illusion that we were in the business of disseminating funds (always welcome) rather than ideas (less so).

The MATNAS dissemination project

The search for a like-minded national organisation led to the *Israeli Association of Community Centres* (MATNAS). The MATNAS Association, as it is commonly called, is a quasi-governmental corporation responsible to the Ministry of Education and Culture. Its Board of Directors is drawn from various ministries and bodies such as the Jewish Agency, the *Histadrut* Federation and the general public. The policy of MATNAS is that each community centre is locally autonomous in policy and in implementation of programmes. Since 1969 the Association has established some 150 multi-purpose community centres, primarily in development towns and distressed urban areas, including several in Arab communities.

In the early 1970s MATNAS introduced various early childhood and parent education programmes into its repertoire of activities. At present some 75 MATNAS centres have early childhood education programmes of one kind or another, including family day care, parent-run nurseries, toy libraries, and parent education programmes. At the national level the MATNAS early childhood division operates a modest training centre and model kindergarten and provides supervision of early childhood facilities at a regional level. At the national level, MATNAS shares a community orientation and commitment to community autonomy and self-activation with the Van Leer network. This is not always the case at the local level where the same autonomy to which MATNAS is committed sometimes results in different and more traditional modes of operation. Nonetheless, the local MATNAS community centre is in many ways the natural base of operations for the development of community-based early childhood programmes, as well as for broader community development, and thus a natural partner for the Association of Van Leer Projects in Israel in its thrust towards dissemination.

To date (mid 1989), the Board of Trustees of the Bernard van Leer Foundation has approved collaboration with the MATNAS Association to develop a regional and national support structure for early childhood and parent education, which will draw on the accumulated knowledge and experience of the Van Leer projects in Israel so as to up-grade staff training at various levels and enhance planning, management and implementation of local programmes. The programme will operate at two levels:

> at the national level, the MATNAS Association and the Van Leer projects will work together to promote early childhood education programmes involving family and community work, and to develop the necessary support structures, such as multi-functional resource and training centres; and
>
> at local level, special activities will be developed in six MATNAS community centres, including two in the Arab sector, to demonstrate and validate the community-based approach to early childhood education. Local experience derived from these programmes will be fed back at national level and facilitate further planning and policy.

This joint endeavour, if successful, holds out the promise of further expansion and dissemination through the network of MATNAS community centres. No less, through its links with the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education, the dissemination scheme is expected to exert a positive influence on the training of early childhood personnel.

How do we move to scale?

Returning to the question posed at the beginning of this chapter: how do we move to scale? How do we go about disseminating the strategy of empowerment on which this study has focused so as to achieve maximum coverage without diluting its impact? We have begun to move in the right direction. Ultimately, despite its direct impact on the lives of the children, parents, para-professionals and for that matter, the community at large, the primary significance of the Van Leer projects' community-based educational interventions lies in the fact that they are able to *demonstrate* the efficacy of an approach to the needs and problems of the child, the family and the community in a variety of different settings. To hope that we can continue to replicate our efforts in some sort of project parthenogenesis is totally unrealistic. The only manner in which we can hope to move to scale is by working with and through the national frameworks, statutory or otherwise, which are involved in the fields of early childhood education and community welfare. This will enable the projects to influence policy, affect training procedures, and play an advocacy role regarding the real need and right of people and communities to determine, shape and assume responsibility for their own lives. In this endeavour, we can indeed turn to the accumulated experience of a decade of Bernard van Leer Foundation-supported community education projects to bear witness that we are on the right path – the path to empowerment.

CHAPTER TEN

Postscript

To draw a composite family portrait of the community-based early childhood education projects supported in Israel by the Bernard van Leer Foundation, remaining faithful to the integrity of each individual project while conveying a sense of that which is common to all, is an almost impossible assignment. How does one break down the whole into its parts and yet retain a sense of the wholeness which distinguishes these integrated community-based projects? On the other hand, how does one synthesise this rich collective experience without homogenising it to the point where the unique flavour of each is lost?

The question is perhaps best answered by another question: what can others learn from this experience? What can it offer to others? The answer, in the first instance, is phrased in the negative: not inflexible models! More positively stated: what can be offered to others is a set of tools and some materials, some guidelines to the process of community education and development (including some indications of what pitfalls to avoid). Ultimately, these are the same elements that the community education project itself has to offer the community: knowledge shared, training, the experience of self-initiated activity and of self-management; awareness of the benefits of mutual aid and cooperation. Beyond that, it is up to the community itself and the people who live in it to carry matters forward.

What other aspects of this experience can be passed on? Perhaps a belief in people and their inherent ability to do things for themselves, if only given a chance; a regard for people's sense of what is right for them, as well as respect for their right to make their own choices; faith in the power of people joining with others to find solutions to their shared problems – faith in the power of community.

These are perhaps old-fashioned and unfashionable virtues (tinged, some might say, by populism). We are often told that 'community' is a chimera, or more charitably, a nostalgia for the past; that the present and the future belong to the individual, to 'man alone'. For the few, this perhaps holds out hope; for most of the people of this earth, it bears a message of despair. For them, the community is the meaningful context of their lives; it is community and the strength that people draw from each other that offers hope. The experience of the Van Leer community education projects bears out this promise.

All of this is not to say that community-based education is the easy route. To struggle to understand people's real needs – and even more so, to help them become aware of their own needs; to convince them that it is within their capacity and power to change their life situations and those of their children; to disabuse them of their expectations of magic solutions and immediate results and convince them of the need to move step by step; to resist the temptation to do things *for* people, rather than helping them to help themselves: none of these are easy processes. Far simpler and certainly far less trying, is to intervene with prepackaged, standardised programmes: 'one size fits all'. The question is, how well indeed can one garment be made to fit all – and how well will it wear? Lasting change cannot be superimposed, but must come from within – the individual, and no less, the community. (The only change that is inevitably superimposed is destructive change.)

In telling this story of the community-based early childhood education projects in Israel, the focus has inevitably been directed to those programmes that have succeeded. But every project also has its tally of half-successes and of failures. However, no failure is ever a total failure. Something can always be learned from it. Working with people and with communities is often an untidy, unpredictable affair, entailing trial and error no less than carefully laid out strategies and plans. Learning from the experiences – both the successes and the failures – of others who have travelled the same road helps, but only part of the way. One must equip oneself with what David Riesman has called 'the nerve to failure'. Not everything works, nor is it always clear why not. Then again, some of the most successful ideas are born out of serendipity!

What other lessons can be learned? That the more one understands the context within which one is working, the better the chances of success. Working with a community calls for knowing that community at both its surface and its subterranean levels: its culture, its taboos and prejudices, its history, its power structure. Further, that there is an in-built contradiction between the belief in self-activation and autonomous functioning, and the process of intervention, posing an unavoidable dilemma which must be honestly confronted. Were the community functioning effectively and independently, there would be no need for intervention; however, the reality is often one of dependence, apathy and fatalism, which must be broken down slowly. In other words, the intervener must take the initiative. The right balance is needed between waiting passively for something to happen and building up new over-dependence. A measure of humility is a good antidote to the fatal fallacy of playing God with other people's lives.

More than ten years have elapsed since those first heady days of breaking new ground in our first community education project in Israel, in the town of Ofakim. In the course of those ten years, that project flourished, matured and came to an end, and other projects came into being. To work with a community means to become part of that community. Looking back on those years, I can honestly say that there are few experiences more rewarding. I like to think that I helped to change the lives of the people and of the community with whom I was so closely involved, that there are things they were able to learn that improved their own and their children's lives. On the other hand, I *know* that that involvement changed my life and there were many things I learned from my involvement with them. As I write these pages, I am once more at home in my own community, where I have lived for almost 40 years. We too struggle with problems, and search for ways to assure our children of the conditions that will permit them to fulfil their potential, assure themselves a better future. Here too, there are no easy, ready-to-hand solutions nor anyone to provide them but ourselves. Here too, the community is the source of our strength and hope.

Kibbutz Kissufim, May 1989

APPENDIX ONE

Major projects supported by the Bernard van Leer Foundation in Israel

The following are brief descriptions of the major projects in Israel which have been supported by the Bernard van Leer Foundation and which are referred to in this book. It should be noted that there are sometimes differences in spellings of names because of transliteration from the Hebrew script. It should also be noted that the names given to projects have sometimes altered over the years as the project in question has developed and changed its emphasis.

The 'project partner' is the agency or institution which implements the project in question. In some cases the project partner has changed over the years.

The descriptions which follow are correct as at January 1990.

Study Centre for Children's Activities
project partner: Oranim: School of Education of the *Kibbutz* Movement
1975 - 1981

The Centre aimed initially at providing an experimental kindergarten in which young children's activities in various play and learning situations were observed and analysed to establish laws that govern and factors that influence the development of creativity. Groups of children from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds were brought by their 'home' kindergarten teachers to the experimental setting to be observed. This produced a unique method for training and retraining pre-school teachers. In a second phase the training aspect became more predominant and the Centre acted as a dissemination agency producing and providing a selection of teaching aids.

The Community Education Project
(formerly called Integrated Education and Community Development)
project partner: Institute for Education and Community Development, Negev Regional College
1977 - 1983

The Ofakim project is described in Chapter Four. It was the first project to be supported by the Bernard van Leer Foundation in Israel which attempted to integrate the theories and practice of child development with the theories and practice of community development.

East Jerusalem Project

(formerly called Early childhood and community education in the Old City)
project partner: The Jerusalem Foundation
1979 - 1991

Between 1979 and 1985, the project developed a unique educational model, linking centre and community-based activities for young children and families in deprived neighbourhoods of the Old City of Jerusalem. Among the programme's many innovative elements were the development of a training system for para-professionals, the extension of the 'parent' concept to include older sisters, the involvement of fathers and adolescent boys, and a productive role for the elderly. The experience in East Jerusalem led to the setting up of a new project to reach out to other Arab communities (see below) and the activities in East Jerusalem are now being consolidated and institutionalised.

Early childhood and parent education in the Negev

(formerly called Education and Community Development in an Industrial Community)
project partner: The Association of the Education and Development Project (formerly the Sha'ar Hanegev Regional Council and the Municipal Council of S'derot)
1981 - 1991

Starting in 1981, a series of parent-oriented educational activities was developed in S'derot, a development town in the Negev in southern Israel. These activities are now being extended to other towns in the Negev which face a range of socio-economic hardships. Implementation of programmes is based on local needs and will include pre-school facilities for 0-6 year olds, enrichment activities for primary school children, programmes in community centres and health clinics and home visiting schemes, all involving parents and specially trained para-professionals from the same communities.

Early childhood and family development

(formerly called Early Childhood and Family Development, Morasha)
project partner: Renewal Department of the Jewish Agency
1982 - 1990

Working originally in the Morasha area of Ramat Hasharon, the project has made concerted efforts to build individual capacity and responsibility in an immigrant community, mainly of North African origin, and develop the skills and understanding to provide educational services for children aged 0-6 years on a self-help basis. In 1989 a new body was formed – the Regional Association for Early Childhood and Family Education, Sharon Region – which is developing new activities such as parent education programmes; and extending and spreading its other programmes – home visiting, family day care and para-professional training – in three other communities in the greater Tel Aviv area.

Community Education Centre
project partner: Pinchas Sapir Regional College of the Negev
1984 - 1986

The aim of the Centre is to promote the active cooperation of family, school and community in the development of a healthy educational environment. The Centre serves the various types of communities – development towns, *moshavim* and *kibbutzim* – in the southern part of Israel. Courses, workshops and seminars are organised in various aspects of early childhood education, family life and community development for professional and para-professional educators and for parents. A wide range of educational materials and learning aids have been developed and collected which are available to all who use the Centre and to those participating in activities arranged outside the Centre.

Education and community development in Merchavim region
project partner: Pinchas Sapir Regional College of the Negev, Sha'ar Hanegev
1983 - 1989

The project began work in 1983 in three *moshavim* (cooperative villages) suffering from isolation, economic and social instability. The aim was to build a self-reliant parent and child education programme as a starting point for autonomous development. An expansion of the project to eight further *moshavim* met with a positive response from the communities. Low-cost, parent-child activities run by local mothers trained as para-professionals and enrichment programmes at Well-baby Clinics reached 85 per cent of the target group.

Arab communities project
(formerly Early childhood and community education in Arab communities)
project partner: Trust for Early Childhood Family and Community Education Programmes
1985 - 1991

Based on the experience of East Jerusalem, the project in its first phase identified four locations where comprehensive education services for pre-school children linked with home-based family support programmes were needed and where there was a readiness on the part of local leaders to become involved. Through para-professional training, family day care centres, home intervention and leadership courses, it was possible to reach a target audience of more than 5,000 families. The production of a series of Arabic newsletters on child-related topics for mothers and families also had considerable impact with a circulation of 15,000 copies. In its second phase, the project is increasing the number of communities involved, strengthening its training programmes, introducing the concept of the community school within existing primary schools, and further developing written and audio-visual materials.

Beta Yisrael project

(formerly called Childcare, Family and Community Education for Ethiopian Immigrants)
project partner: The Association for the Advancement of the Ethiopian Family and Child in Israel (formerly Pinchas Sapir Regional College of the Negev, Ashkelon)
1985 - 1991

The *Beta Israel* consists of some 12,000 Ethiopian Jews who have settled in Israel since the mid-1970s, many during the drought and famine of 1984-85. Many families found the experience of adjusting to their new homeland traumatic. During its first three years the project, which is located in Beersheva, developed a range of community-based child and family oriented programmes including cooperative pre-schools, enrichment programmes, home visiting services, group work for parents and adolescents, and a health education programme. Ethiopian women, trained as para-professionals, implement many aspects of these programmes. In a second phase, the project is extending the range of its programmes throughout Beer Sheva and also in Ashkelon; intensifying its home visiting programme; instituting a training programme for health and education workers; and expanding its health education activities. It is also undertaking dissemination and advocacy tasks in cooperation with national bodies.

Acre project

(formerly Early childhood care and education in an integrated Arab/Jewish community in Acre)
project partner: Trust for community and education in Acre (YAHAD)
(formerly Association for Community and Education in Acre)
1986 - 1990

Acre, in northern Israel, has a mixed Jewish and Arab population. Acre faces a number of problems: poor housing, high unemployment and a lack of adequate educational facilities. The project is working with both Arab and Jewish parents, children and other community members in an effort to overcome some of the problems affecting young children. Activities include child care, informal pre-school enrichment, resource provision, community organisation and multi-disciplinary training for para-professionals. Both Arab and Jewish residents actively participate at all levels and links are being made with city-wide institutions.

MATNAS project
project partner: Israel Association of Community Centres (MATNAS)
1988 - 1992

MATNAS is a national association responsible for some 150 multi-purpose community centres in Israel, mainly located in Development Towns and depressed urban neighbourhoods. About half of these centres run varying types of early childhood and parent education programmes and the aim of the project is to develop a range of training and curriculum models to suit the needs of professional and para-professional staff and parents. The project is working at both local and national levels and using the accumulated knowledge and experience of other Foundation-supported programmes in Israel to promote early childhood work involving family and community.

APPENDIX TWO

Changing perceptions, changing responses: the background to educational disadvantage in Israel

In Israel as elsewhere, educational and socio-economic disadvantage correlate with each other and are closely linked with ethnicity. Almost without exception, the 'educationally disadvantaged' child is the child of 'Oriental' parents. This bald statement provides little illumination as to why this should be so. Since the origins of disadvantage in Israel are rooted in its unique history, educational disadvantage cannot be discussed without reference to the socio-political context which gave birth to the problem. Moreover, it is important to keep in mind that Israel, whose population is more than 80 per cent Jewish, also contains a not insignificant non-Jewish (primarily Arab) minority, and that the problem of educational disadvantage is no less salient in the non-Jewish sector. Since the etiology of disadvantage in these two sectors is quite different, separate discussions are called for.

The Jewish population: ethnicity and disadvantage

During two millennia of exile which followed the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 AD and the loss of a political-ethnic centre, the Jewish people became dispersed throughout the world, adopting many of the characteristics of the different peoples amongst whom they lived. By the end of the 19th century, the major division in the Diaspora was between *Ashkenazi* (primarily European) and Oriental Jews, the latter mostly concentrated in Moslem countries of the Middle East, Arabia, and North Africa. Oriental Jewry constituted no more than 10 per cent of world Jewry at the time; by European standards its members were poor and backward; moreover, geographic remoteness combined with barriers of language and culture to create a chasm which was not bridged until after the establishment of the State.[1]

Zionism, the movement of Jewish national renaissance, came into being in the latter part of the 19th century, under the influence of European national movements. With the official establishment of the World Zionist Organisation at the First Zionist Congress in 1897, the age-old dream of return to Zion was transformed into a practical political programme. Although the Zionist movement professed the ideal of redeeming Jews the world over and forging them into one people, it had come into existence in response to the 'Jewish Problem' in Europe and, in practice, focused its activities primarily on European Jewry.

The pre-State era

The foundations of modern Israel were laid by five waves of Zionist immigration from Europe between 1882 and 1948 – a total of some 500,000 Jews – who established the *New Yishuv* (the new Jewish Community). Zionism lent itself to various cultural-ideological interpretations: secular and religious, traditional and revolutionary, holding in common a denial of Diaspora life and the belief that only in the land of Israel could a new, modern and viable Jewish society develop.

Major steps in nation-building were accomplished during the 30 years of the British Mandate (1918-48). During this period, the *Yishuv* attained a kind of autonomous self-rule. Social services, education, culture, immigration, and agricultural settlement were – within existing political constraints – administered by autonomous Jewish political and administrative systems, which carried out quasi-governmental functions.[2] This highly organised, complex network of institutions was supported by self-imposed taxation of the local community and contributions from Jews throughout the world.[3]

A comprehensive educational system was established in this fashion to serve the needs and meet the expectations of the Jewish community. While Mandatory law called for four years of free and compulsory primary schooling, 95 per cent of the children in the Jewish sector received nine years of free schooling, including one year of kindergarten. Provision for early childhood education was an integral part of this system: the Working Women's Organisation of the *Histadrut*, the General Federation of Labour, established a network of infant creches and day care centres for working women in urban areas and villages, while the *kibbutzim* pioneered collective education from infancy onward, training early childhood educators in the best traditions of middle-European progressive education.

A fact sometimes forgotten in the story of the pre-State *Yishuv* is the not insignificant presence of Oriental Jews in Palestine during this period. The latter – some 60 per cent of the Jewish population in 1882, and 23 per cent on the eve of Israel's birth – constituted the majority of the *Old Yishuv*, which was concentrated in the four holy cities of Jerusalem, Safad, Tiberias and Hebron. Culturally traditional and economically backward, virtually dependent for its existence on charity from abroad, the *Old Yishuv* on the whole occupied the lowest socio-economic positions and deviated from the *New Yishuv* mainstream in other ways, such as in its disproportionately high crime-rate and illiteracy rates. For the pioneers of the *New Yishuv*, the *Old Yishuv* represented the Diaspora against which they had rebelled, and they tended either to ignore it or to try and neutralise it as a social force. Smooha (1978) summarises the relationship: 'Behind the lofty ideals of 'one people' and the neutralisation of ethnicity there were the stark realities of superiority and paternalism of *Ashkenazim* towards Orientals ... (who) were looked upon as backward and incapable of contributing to the new society'.[4] The ethnic issue, which became increasingly salient with the mass immigration of Jews from the Moslem world in the 1950s and 1960s, can thus be seen as pre-dating the establishment of the State.

Among children of Oriental background academic achievement was very low and drop-out rates very high; few went on to secondary education, and delinquency was extensive. However, for reasons previously mentioned, educational disadvantage was a non-issue and hence also a non-policy in the pre-State *Yishuv*.[5]

It is not irrelevant to point out that the political culture of Israel was also shaped during this period. Political parties, representing different ideological currents, struggled for control of the Zionist movement and the institutions of the *Yishuv*. In the pre-State era, political parties controlled and allocated major resources – housing, employment, education, health services. While with the establishment of the State, these functions were undertaken by government agencies, the political parties became 'power brokers' and 'resource brokers'. Another feature of the political culture rooted in the pre-State era is the centralisation so characteristic of Israel: major decisions, allocation of resources and policies are centrally determined in most of the national systems; about 50 per cent of investment in the economy is channeled through government, and the public sector is the largest employer. Great economic power is in the hands of government and the consequent dependence of large sectors of the population on the government and its bureaucracies has turned political power into a major criterion of status and a major resource.[6]

The establishment of the State and the 'ingathering of the exiles'

The institutions of the *Yishuv*, with appropriate modifications, became the institutions of the new State after Independence in 1948. By declaring itself as the Jewish state, Israel assumed indirect responsibility for Jews all over the world, and accordingly, strongly committed herself to immigration. The Law of Return passed by the *Knesset* (parliament) in 1947 assured every Jew of automatic citizenship upon immigration. The government, directly and through the Jewish Agency or subsidiary agencies, engaged in an historically unprecedented effort of immigrant recruitment and absorption, assuming responsibility for housing, employment, and many other areas.[7]

Immigrants began to pour into the country immediately after the Declaration of Independence on 15 May 1948. The first to arrive were the so-called 'illegal' immigrants who had been interned by the British authorities in Cyprus after attempting to enter the country during the last months of the Mandate; then came Jews from the Displaced Persons' Camps in Europe, survivors of the Nazi holocaust. They were followed by large groups – sometimes whole communities

– of Jews escaping from Arab countries in the Middle East (Yemen, Iraq, Syria, Egypt) and North Africa (Morocco, Tunisia, Libya, Algeria). Within three years close to 687,000 immigrants arrived in the country, a number larger than that of the absorbing population. A further one million Jews emigrated to Israel between 1951 and 1981.[8] Under the impact of mass immigration of Jews from the Moslem world, the ethnic composition of Israel changed radically. Whereas Jews of European origin had constituted 80 per cent of the Jewish population prior to 1948, by 1963 Oriental Jews achieved parity, and by 1975 became the majority of the population.[9]

Mass immigration and absorption

The overwhelming problem of immigrant absorption in the initial period was how to provide the masses of immigrants with basic necessities: food and shelter. The first wave of immigrants, arriving while war was still raging, were housed in army camps vacated by the British and in neighbourhoods and villages abandoned as a result of military operations; as these were exhausted, tent camps were hastily set up. This camp population, maintained at public expense, reached a total of 100,000 by the summer of 1949. The hardship of life in the camps was extreme, and the financial burden placed on the State and the Jewish Agency intolerable.

In response to the most urgent problems of housing and employment, existing camps were turned into *ma'abarot* (transitional work villages) and additional *ma'abarot* established near industrial or agricultural centers in order to facilitate employment.[10] The adult residents of these camps were employed in an extensive public works programme of road construction, land reclamation, afforestation and irrigation initiated by the government. These emergency measures were instituted to cope with the most immediate and pressing problems of immigrant absorption. At the same time, comprehensive plans were drawn up for country-wide population redistribution and settlement. The aim was to meet a number of needs simultaneously: prevention of massive congestion in the urban areas and concomitant over-burdening of labour markets and social services; development of the sparsely-settled outlying regions of the country, and securing of the country's recently-contested borders. The pioneering ideology and the tradition of centralised decision-making and social planning which had proven themselves in the pre-State era were the means. The major vehicles chosen for this purpose were the *moshav*, the small-holders' cooperative village, and the small and medium-sized urban settlements which came to be known as development towns.[11] Implementation of this policy was facilitated by the almost total dependence of the majority of immigrants on public agencies.

Reluctant pioneers

From the vantage point of the 1980s, the absorption policies of the early 1950s may strike one as social engineering run amok, with strong authoritarian overtones. Smooha, for example, maintains that the primary policy goal was to make the immigrants instrumental in the realisation of national objectives, and that their 'integration' was of secondary import: thus Oriental immigrants lacking both practical training and ideological motivation for agriculture (especially not for its cooperative forms) were nevertheless 'coerced' into ways of working which were of high value from the point of view of the absorbing society.[12] Indeed, only a small minority of immigrants were imbued with an active Zionist – not to speak of pioneering – ideology. The overwhelming majority of those arriving after the establishment of the state saw in Israel primarily a homeland and a place of refuge and safety, and were reluctant to change their traditional ways of life and occupation.[13]

Those immigrants who established and settled the development towns and *moshavim* in the outlying areas of the country have been called the 'reluctant pioneers', a term which succinctly sums up the reality of that period. The implementation of the old Zionist pioneering vision of settlement – reinforced by the necessity to populate all the parts of the State – was fuelled by government policy and direction, rather than the voluntary ethos of pioneering.[14] Given the conditions prevailing at the time – mass immigration, austerity and scarcity of resources, underdevelopment of large areas of the country, and borders threatened by belligerent neighbours, there may well not have been a viable alternative to this policy.

Population dispersal

By the mid-1950s, the special systems created to cope with the initial mass influx of immigrants – the public works and the *ma'abarot* – had almost disappeared, while the settlement of *moshavim* and development towns continued as the favoured policy for the absorption of consequent waves of immigration. Between 1948 and 1956, 233 new *moshavim* were established and the process of building new towns, resettling towns abandoned in the War of Independence and expanding existing urban nuclei proceeded at rapid pace. The development towns made possible the implementation of the policy of population dispersal – however, their very establishment led to the creation of economic and social, no less than geographic, marginal areas.[15] To create work for the new immigrants, the government provided incentives for labour-intensive, low-capital and low-skill industries (mainly textile and food processing) to establish plants in development towns. Understanding that their prospects of upward mobility were limited, immigrants with skills left the towns as soon as they were able to establish themselves in other communities.

During the 1950s and 1960s, the development towns functioned as ports of entry for new immigrants; their inability to retain more resourceful and more acculturated newcomers, or to attract settlers from other communities, meant that those who remained were often the unskilled, the very young, the aged and those with social problems. Initially, the task of governing these new towns of immigrants and establishing the necessary infra-structure of educational, health and welfare services was in the hands of veterans – usually drawn from the dominant *Ashkenazi* sector. Out-migration of the more skilled and upwardly mobile of the new settlers served to perpetuate, and sometimes deepen, the dependence of these towns on non-resident professional and administrative personnel. Distance from the centres of population, especially when combined with a low level of educational and public services, presented yet a further obstacle to advancement.[16] The development towns, together with the remaining *ma'abarot*, became symbols of the distance from the established predominantly *Ashkenazi* society and of discrimination.

A greater proportion of new immigrants had settled in the established towns and cities, where the poorer stratum of Oriental immigrants congregated in the older quarters and in the jerry-built new housing developments. Their families often lived below the poverty line for two and sometimes three generations, under conditions fostering growing alienation.[17]

Absorption policies and their consequences

Under the best of circumstances, migration is a wrenching experience, a process of uprooting, disorientation, and slow re-adjustment. When it also demands adaptation to a different language, climate, occupation, lifestyle, culture and customs, it can be traumatic. As East met West in the mass influx of Oriental immigrants, the predominantly *Ashkenazi* absorbing society often displayed a remarkable lack of sensitivity to the immigrants' problems of adjustment, while conscientiously providing for their basic needs for food, shelter, and services.

The majority of the immigrants arriving after the establishment of the State differed considerably in both their motivations and their cultural background from those who had come to the country during the *Yishuv* era, who were now charged with the responsibility for their absorption. The initial reaction to these differences was to regard these new immigrants as 'the generation of the desert' (a simile derived from the Book of Exodus, referring to the Jews who turned their backs on exile and slavery in Egypt, but were forced to wander 40 years in the desert before they were able to enter the promised land) – whose cultural distinctiveness would hopefully disappear with their full absorption, or at the least, with the integration of their children into the dominant mould.

The very concept of 'the ingathering of the exiles' into one nation left little room for cultural diversity; the prevailing paradigm was that of the melting-pot. The problem of absorption was defined – especially by political leaders and those dealing with problems of settlement – as one of underdevelopment and backwardness, to be overcome through modernisation, under the paternalistic tutelage of the absorbing agencies. This led to attempts, which at times were semi-coercive, to make the immigrants change their way of life. Inadvertently, this approach often served to weaken family solidarity and community cohesion – variables crucial for successful adaptation – particularly among the weaker groups.[18] No less devastating was the effect on the immigrants' self-image and on their faith in their own adequacy and competency to cope. The highly bureaucratic absorption process, directed from the centre, further compounded the difficulties of absorption. Political parties regarded the immigrants as potential voters to be organised and made safe; political pressure was often exerted on them at the local level by officials of agencies controlling resources.[19] Lastly, informal discrimination and stereotyping further exacerbated the difficulties of adjustment and led to smouldering resentment.

Needs of new immigrants

The main challenge facing Israel's educational system during the first decade of its existence was the establishment of an educational infrastructure to meet the needs of the masses of new immigrants. A network of kindergartens and primary schools was established wherever the immigrants settled and teachers, not always qualified, were drafted to staff thousands of new classrooms. No less of a challenge was the integration, the merging of these immigrants from all corners of the world into one nation. This was to be achieved through a policy of formal equality, underwritten by the Compulsory Education Law of 1949 which made it mandatory for all children – Jewish and Arab – to attend school for nine years from age five to fourteen. The law was intended to ensure that children from poor families attended school and to force parents to send their children to school. (Shortly after the law was passed, compulsory education also became free.)

Through the establishment of a uniform school system, a uniform curriculum and uniform national standards of school achievement, the educational policy makers hoped to overcome the enormous cultural heterogeneity and to achieve cultural conformity to the dominant *Ashkenazi* mainstream.[20] This was in line with the overall orientation towards immigrant absorption, the 'melting pot' concept.

By the early 1950s there was increasing evidence of educational disadvantage and low achievement among children from Oriental families. Policy makers refused at first to acknowledge the relationship between ethnicity and educational failure, in the belief that such an admission was equal to official recognition of the inferiority of Oriental children.[21]

Compensatory education

The outbreak of violent ethnic protest in Wadi Salib, a Haifa slum inhabited by North African immigrants, in July 1959, served as the catalyst leading finally to official recognition of the existence of an ethnic problem and to re-evaluation of existing social and educational policy. The report of the public inquiry committee appointed to investigate the causes of the outburst documented widespread feelings of deprivation and alienation, especially among the North African immigrants, and recommended a social policy that would accelerate the absorption process and ethnic integration.[22] In response, the Ministry of Education and Culture adopted an official policy of compensatory education, replacing the principle of formal equality with that of equality of educational opportunity. The underlying assumption of this approach was that the provision of special opportunities and compensatory programmes to the 'culturally disadvantaged' would enable them to overcome the primary gap in school readiness.[23]

The term *teunei tipuach* (in need of fostering) – expressing the 'affirmative action' thrust of compensatory education – became the official term for the beneficiaries of this policy. Moshe Smilansky, one of the architects of the new policy, points out that this concept was introduced to communicate three basic humanistic assumptions: an optimistic faith in the change and growth potential of the groups concerned; a dynamic, process-oriented definition of cultural disadvantage and social commitment; and an assumption of responsibility for the development of effective intervention approaches to help the disadvantaged cope with the expectations accompanying the modernisation process.[24]

Adoption of a policy of compensatory education was accompanied by the introduction of a broad variety of strategies at all levels of the educational system, from experiments in cognitive development in early childhood to second-chance preparation for higher education, from the extended school-day to programmes for the gifted disadvantaged.

Following the lead of the United States, emphasis began to be placed on the intellectual fostering of the pre-school child, the objective being to prevent the accumulation of 'deficits' and increase future chances of scholastic success. A variety of school readiness programmes were introduced into the kindergartens.

One of the underlying assumptions of compensatory education, in Israel as elsewhere, is that cultural deprivation in the home during the first years of life creates cumulative deficits in cognitive and social functioning which prevent the child from realising his potential. However, parents played almost no role in the overwhelmingly school-based and school-centred programmes, whether because the policy of compensatory education was initiated by the Ministry of Education and Culture, or because of the prevalent ethnocentricity which regarded the immigrant parents of children 'in need of fostering' as incorrigibly backward and unamenable to change. As in the preceding stage, the onus of change and adaptation was placed on the disadvantaged child. To quote Smilansky: 'The dominant group continued to demand rules for a social game according to its needs, while the disadvantaged were left with only two alternatives: lose their identity and be accommodated as second rate citizens or fail and drop out.' [25] Haim Adler, discussing the educational strategies of this period, expresses surprise that given the fact that the most significant resources in early childhood seem to be interpersonal relationships and emotional development, so little help was extended to parents.[26]

The HIPPY (Home Instruction Programme for Pre-School Youngsters) programme, initiated in 1969, towards the end of this stage, by Dr. Avima Lombard, was the first compensatory education programme to focus on the child within the family context. Following the findings from research on compensatory education in the United States, HIPPY directly involved parents of 5 to 7 year olds in the cognitive stimulation of their children and used para-professional aides from the community as home visitors who, by means of role-play, taught the mothers how to teach the highly structured and programmed weekly lessons to her child.[27]

The early 1960s brought acceptance of cultural pluralism and recognition that the cultural heritage of the ethnic groups – the *edot* should be recognised, encouraged and accommodated. This emphasis on *edot* – initiated to a high degree from the centre – was given political expression by the major parties in the form of increasing mobilisation or cooptation of leaders from within these groups to serve as their representatives.[28] This move effectively neutralised the danger of ethnic separatism, opened up channels of mobility within the establishment, and gave the members of the Oriental elite a stake in the system. As pointed out earlier, major changes were introduced into the educational system in an effort to narrow the education gap. The end of the decade was marked by growing general prosperity, increased participation and incorporation of Orientals into the political establishment and considerable advance in educational achievement. Moreover, significant cultural changes had taken place: the Western culture of the *Ashkenazi* settlers had become the dominant one in the country, and the Westernising process reached a point of no return. However, the advancing acculturation and social assimilation of Orientals strengthened their awareness of ethnic inequality, which became more salient and less tolerable.

'The ethnic gap'

Despite recurring warfare and constant threats to its very existence, the country had developed at an unprecedented pace, as the growth of its economy struggled to keep pace with the growth of its population. By the beginning of its third decade, Israel emerged as a highly industrialised modern nation, with an occupational structure similar to that of Western economies and a *per capita* income and standard of living matching that of the 'intermediate' European countries. Nonetheless, a social reality had developed which was at serious odds with the self-image and dominant values of the society. Growing prosperity could not conceal the persistence of pockets of poverty and deprivation, or the existence of glaring social and economic inequalities.

Socio-economic status clearly overlapped with ethnic origin, creating the phenomenon of ethnic stratification – what popularly came to be called 'the ethnic gap', or, in bitter reflection on the original promise, 'the second Israel'. Unsurprisingly, socio-economic disadvantage and ethnicity were in turn closely linked to educational disadvantage, creating a vicious circle of deprivation, perpetuating the gap.

Moreover, a new, Israeli-born generation, with rising expectations and increasing impatience with inferior status, had come of age. The violent demonstrations of the Black Panthers, a movement of young Oriental Jews from Jerusalem, exemplified this new militancy, and served to draw public attention to the persistance of the ethnic gap. In their demands for slum clearance, drastic improvement of educational opportunities for Oriental children and employment for Oriental youth they called on the establishment to live up to its own ideology and close the gap between the professed unity of the Jewish nation and the current social reality.[29]

The government response illustrates the dialectic of political pressure, establishment response, and consequent policy change. In February 1971, a special commission was appointed and charged with the investigation of the conditions of children and youth in distress, as well as with the formulation of a comprehensive policy to combat educational disadvantage.

The Katz Report

In June 1973, the 'Report of the Prime Minister's Commission for Children and Youth in Distress' (commonly called the Katz Report, after Yisrael Katz, Director-General of the National Insurance Institute, who headed the commission) was published, and caused some furore. The report, defining 'distress' as the lack of conditions considered essential for a decent existence by standards accepted in Israeli society, placed the number of children in distress at 160,000, of whom 25,000 were stated to be 'in deep distress'. Between 92 and 94 per cent of these distressed children came from families whose country of origin was African or Asian – as did *all* the children categorised as being 'in deep distress'.[30]

The statistics of the Ministry of Education and Culture (Planning Division 1974) corroborated the fact that deprivation and disadvantage in the Jewish sector correlated highly with ethnic group membership: 94.7 per cent of disadvantaged children in Jewish elementary education came from Oriental families – whereas their percentage among the total population of elementary school pupils was only 56.6 per cent.[31] By the beginning of the third decade of Israel's existence, the ethnic problem, or more accurately, the 'ethnic gap', came to be perceived as one of – if not *the* – central internal problem of Israeli society.[32]

The recommendations of the Katz Report were a radical departure from all previous approaches to the problems of disadvantage. The Report called for a multi-faceted and coordinated intervention in a number of areas critical to the reduction of distress: education, welfare, health, housing, employment. No less ground-breaking were the guidelines for intervention proposed by the Commission:

> a. the assurance of conditions for the active participation of the distressed population in society and for the development of leadership from its ranks;
>
> b. focus on the strengthening of the family in its role as the fundamental socialising cell of society;
>
> c. intentional universality, as opposed to 'services for the poor', so as to lessen the isolation of the distressed from the general population, encourage them to break out of their condition, and raise their social prestige and self-image;
>
> d. cultivation of public and social consciousness and encouragement of a volunteer spirit in the nation to help reduce distress.[33]

Practical recommendations included such innovations as parent centres to provide guidance and assistance to parents of infants and toddlers; opening schools to the community and turning them into multi-functional community education centres; involving parents in the decision-making processes in educational institutions, and the organisation and training of neighbourhood committees. For the first time, the crucial importance of early childhood education, and the critical role of parents as their children's first educators, received official recognition.

The Educational Welfare Project

The recommendations of the Commission provided the guidelines for the formulation of a new educational policy focused on parental and community participation and involvement in their children's education.[34] The Educational Welfare Project, designed to reinforce school-based programmes through intervention extending beyond the formal school framework, was chosen as the major vehicle of this policy.

The underlying philosophy guiding the Educational Welfare Project was summarised in three key principles.

> 1. Decentralisation: One of the key aims of the project was to enhance community pride and improve the inhabitants' self-image. This was to be achieved through a process of devolution of control and fostering of local autonomy and responsibility. Local steering committees were assigned the task of defining educational needs; choosing appropriate programmes from a pool of existing programmes and adapting them to local needs, or initiating new programmes; implementing the programmes and monitoring and evaluating their effect.
>
> 2. Intensity: It was believed that the intensive and exclusive concentration of resources and educational and organisational efforts on defined areas and populations would have a powerful impact leading to positive results.
>
> 3. Comprehensiveness: Educational research had indicated that when intervention was focused on an age-group, even when good results were achieved, they tended to fade later. The principle of comprehensiveness recognised the need for a programme encompassing all age levels, from birth until late adolescence, and called for as many frameworks as possible – formal and informal – in the school, the family and the community.[35]

The Educational Welfare Project reflects the educational establishment's increasing awareness of the shortcomings of the paternalistic models of the 1950s and 1960s, as well as its response to the demand of the Oriental population for fuller participation in the existing system, increased social and political influence, and a far larger share of national resources.

In the development of local Educational Welfare Projects these principles revealed themselves as difficult to implement and at times contradictory in their intentions. The principle of de-centralisation recognised the right of community members to direct certain areas of the community's educational system by themselves and to define local priorities according to their own perceptions, while the principle of comprehensiveness, emphasising the importance of continuity in educational intervention, countered the effort to establish local priorities. Local steering committees (most of whose members themselves represented different educational and political sectors in the community) were ill-equipped to assess needs and determine priorities objectively, and thus tended to divide the limited resources among the various sectors, often in response to political pressure.[36] As a result, the Educational Welfare Project at the local level was often a hodgepodge of uncoordinated interventions, in contradiction of the principle of intensity.

The Ministry of Education's efforts to maintain 'quality control' through the provision of existing and approved educational programmes was yet another, more subtle, form of direction from the centre. Many of these programmes depended on professional inputs, and the lack of trained local manpower often made it necessary, yet again, to 'import' the needed skills. Since the Ministry of Education and Culture was organisationally and professionally responsible for the Educational Welfare Project (establishing yet another bureaucratic subsystem for this purpose), it is not surprising that community-based, grassroots programmes were the exception rather than the rule.

The Minkovitch Study

Educational research in Israel and elsewhere provided increasing evidence of the role played by parents and the home environment in the child's development and educational achievement. In 1977, the findings of a major evaluation study of Israeli elementary education, conducted by Prof. A. Minkovich and a team of researchers from the Hebrew University's School of Education with the support of the Bernard van Leer Foundation, were published.

The Minkovitch Study, based on a sample of 98 elementary schools and 17,000 pupils, collected and analyzed data in three areas: pupil characteristics, school characteristics and learning achievement in the school. The first area, of particular relevance here, included data on the cultural and socio-economic background of the pupil's family, home conditions and patterns of socialisation and interaction relevant to the child's intellectual development, learning achievement and learning experiences prior to kindergarten. Reciprocal connections were found to exist between the items comprising the above areas, most of which in turn were shown to be related to learning achievement. These correlations showed that even before entering school, there were significant differences between children of families from Asia/Africa and children from Europe/America – producing inequality of educational opportunity even when conditions in the school system were equal.[37]

In his recommendations, Prof. Minkovich stressed the crucial role of parents in promoting their children's intellectual development, and recommended that schools train parents to assist their children at home.[38]

The Peled proposals

A programme proposal for Israeli education in the 1980s, submitted to the Minister of Education and Culture in 1976 by Elad Peled, at the time Director General of the Ministry, made similar recommendations. Peled focused especially on family intervention programmes and work with parents in order to foster the development of the child. The proposal stressed the fact that education can only take place in the context in which the child finds him or her self; that not all approaches are equally effective for all parts of the population; that room must be made for a variety of forms; and that the organisational expression of socio-cultural pluralism is decentralisation. Hence what was required was the forging of links between parents, educational authorities and the community as well as the re-establishment of educational roles for the community – especially in view of the overly-bureaucratised nature of the central educational system.

The proposal underlined the sense of distress accompanying educational disadvantage: the frustration and the anger amidst increasing general prosperity, and the low self-image resulting from internalisation of the dominant *Ashkenazi* society's downgrading of Oriental culture. The proposal called for treating parents as partners, rather than as recipients of services, for family and parent education, especially from birth to three years, and for more parental involvement at all stages of the child's education. Suggested frameworks included such non-statutory educational innovations as parent-run day care centres, factory-based creches, afternoon enrichment programmes for kindergarten children, resource centres for parents, and so forth.[39]

In the 1980s, these proposals were to some measure implemented by Project Renewal, which brought together organised Jewry in the Diaspora and disadvantaged communities in Israel. Only too often, however, Project Renewal encountered the same obstacles which some years earlier had blocked the efforts of the Educational Welfare Project. Since the recognition of the link between educational disadvantage and ethnicity in the early 1960s, considerable headway had been made towards closing the educational gap between the 'two Israels'. In the period from 1960 to 1985, illiteracy dropped from 12.6 to 5 per cent; in 1985, 24.4 per cent of the Jewish population had some post-secondary education, as compared to 9.9 per cent in 1960; the average level of education had risen to 11.5 years.[40] The relative gap, however, has been more resistant to change: for example, in 1985 the Israeli-born offspring of 'Western' immigrants accounted for more than twice the percentage of their Oriental counterparts among university students: 43.8 per cent, compared to 16.4 per cent in 1982/83. (However, less than 10 years earlier, in 1974/5, the ratio had been more than one to six – 49.4 per cent compared to 7.3 per cent.)[41]

The Arab minority in the Jewish state: conflicting perceptions and problems

The same paragraph in Israel's Declaration of Independence which threw open the gates of the country to Jewish immigration proclaimed the constituting principles of the State: freedom, justice, peace, and the assurance of equal civil and social rights for all citizens. Although the new state was at war with five Arab armies which had invaded in the wake of the United Nations resolution partitioning Palestine, she called on the Arab population within her boundaries to take part in nation-building on the basis of full and equal citizenship. One might say that the Declaration of Independence at one and the same time determined the central agenda of the Jewish State and the yardstick against which the successes and failures of the Israeli experience of nation-building must be measured. Moreover, it determined the reality of Israel as a pluralistic state, with a Jewish (82.5 per cent) majority and a non-Jewish, mainly Arab (17.5 per cent) minority.[42]

The Arab minority in Israel differs radically from that of minorities – ethnic, cultural, religious or national – in other parts of the world. In terms of language, religion, history, tradition, culture and kinship ties as well as in self-perception, Israeli Arabs are an integral part of the surrounding Arab world. The overwhelming majority of Israeli Arabs regard themselves as a national minority, 'citizens of a state at war with their people, the Palestinians, and with their nation, the Arab world'.[43]

The Arab population of Israel is in effect trapped between two conflicting and, to date, irreconcilable forces: Arab nationalism and citizenship in the Jewish state. The United Nations General Assembly resolution of November 1947 which called for the partitioning of Palestine into a Jewish and Arab state was accepted by the Jews and constituted the formal basis for the Declaration of Independence of the State of Israel upon termination of the British Mandate in May 1948; it was however, categorically rejected by the Arabs of Palestine, who took up arms against it in a conflict in which they were supported by the invading armies of five Arab countries.

The post-Independence situation

The Israeli-Arab War of 1948 terminated in Arab defeat and the mass flight of some 700,000 Arabs, and left Israel in control of 81 per cent of the disputed territory of Palestine, rather than the 56 per cent it was originally allotted.[44] The 156,000 Arabs who remained within the confines of the new Jewish state were a defeated and involuntary minority, faced with a traumatic reversal of status and a new socio-political reality which psychologically was difficult to accept.[45] Nor did the Jewish majority particularly welcome this reality of a non-Jewish, non-Zionist – if not outrightly hostile – Arab minority in its midst. However, the Declaration of Independence had assured full equality to all citizens of Israel, irrespective of religion or nationality. Accordingly, the Arabs of Israel were granted citizenship and full civil liberties. Arabic was recognised as an official language, and their right to a separate religious and cultural identity honoured.[46]

Official policy aimed for 'the complete integration of the minorities of Israel into all spheres of life in the State, while respecting their cultural and religious individuality'.[47] Three factors have influenced government policy towards the Arab minority: national security, the Jewish identity of the State, and democratic pluralism. While in principle, these factors are considered to be compatible, they are less easily reconciled in practice. The goal has been 'to make the Arabs in Israel loyal citizens, resigned to their fate as a minority in the Jewish state, and acquiring a new consciousness and a new identity as Israeli Arabs.'[48] Translated into policy, this has had both positive and negative consequences for the Israeli Arab population. 'To make the Arabs loyal citizens' has meant on the one hand granting civil rights and political participation, but on the other, measures to prevent them from becoming a security threat. Recognition of minority status in the Jewish state has meant enabling the Arabs to preserve their status as an ethnic and religious minority and encouraging them to accept it fully, but rejecting their claim to status as a national minority with autonomous institutions, since this is perceived as jeopardising the Jewish mould and character of the state. The fostering of an Israeli Arab identity has meant denial of the existence of a distinct Palestinian identity and efforts to discourage Pan-Arab or Palestinian nationalism.[49]

One can but speculate on the degree to which full integration might have been achieved successfully under conditions of peace in the area. In fact, conditions have been those of the continuing and unresolved Arab-Israeli conflict, which has exerted a pervasive and negative influence on relations between Jew and Arab in Israel. The conflict is ever-present and immediate, an endless source of mutual alienation and suspicion, hardening attitudes on both sides, attenuating the common ground, and making it increasingly difficult for the Arab in Israel to come to terms with an Israeli Arab identity based on cultural (rather than national) minority status and the severance of ties to Palestinian nationalism.

Attitudes towards the State of Israel

Renewed contact and interaction with the population of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip after the 1967 War (and even more so, after the 1973 Yom Kippur war) accelerated the 'Palestinisation' and radicalisation of Israel's Arab minority, and served to crystallise its self-identity as a national minority. According to a 1976 survey, the majority (64 per cent) of Israeli Arabs were found to reject the Jewish-Zionist character of Israel (whose very name defines it as the Jewish State and whose flag and anthem are those of the Zionist movement), regarded Zionism as an exclusionist and discriminatory movement rather than as the national liberation movement of the Jews, and called for the repeal of the Law of Return. Seventy per cent felt that Arabs cannot be equal citizens in an Israel which is a Jewish-Zionist state; 50 per cent reject or have reservations regarding Israel's right to exist altogether.

While the overwhelming majority – 75 per cent – favoured the establishment of a Palestinian state alongside Israel, only a minority were prepared to move to such a state. (The remaining 25 per cent presumably includes the 21 per cent who categorically oppose Israel's right to exist, and who can be assumed to favour replacing Israel with a Palestinian state).[50] A majority saw their future as a separate-but-equal people in a bi-national state which would permit the repatriation of refugees from the 1948 war. In comparison, over 90 per cent of Israel's Jewish population were found to have rejected these demands, opposed any change in the Jewish-Zionist character of the state, such as a bi-national state, rejected the establishment of a separate Palestinian state alongside Israel, and were against the return of Arab refugees who fled the country in 1948.[51]

It is difficult to visualise a greater polarisation, or to conceive of a solution except within the framework of an overall peace agreement between Israel and all its Arab neighbours. As long as the latter continue to pose a threat to Israel's security and existence, Israeli Arabs will continue to be regarded as a liability to national security, and their demands for full equality will be blocked, no less by fear than by prejudice. Polarisation and interdependence are however not mutually exclusive. Forty years of involuntary co-existence and interaction with Jewish society have had a profound and paradoxical impact on Arab society in Israel. In the 1980s, Israeli Arabs, especially if born after the establishment of the State, are Palestinian in their self-identity – but at the same time, increasingly bilingual and at times even bicultural.

While the Jews paternalistically stress their beneficial and modernising influence on the Israeli Arabs, pointing to the latter's dramatically improved standard of living, educational achievements, health and life expectancy, Israeli Arabs, taking the Jews as their comparative (though not normative) reference group, suffer from a sharp sense of relative deprivation, perceiving themselves as a socio-economically disadvantaged and underprivileged sector in a highly industrialised, middle class society.[52] Not surprisingly, modernisation has contributed more to discontent than to adaptation: the more 'modernised' (urbanised, Westernised, educated and better off) Israeli Arabs are often also the more nationalistic and alienated.[53]

From majority to minority: the pre-State era

Palestine before World War I was the least prosperous part of that region of the Ottoman Empire designated as Greater Syria. It is estimated that at the time the population consisted of some 600,000 Arabs and 80,000 Jews. The Arabs had been indigenous to the area for centuries; at least some of the Jews were descendants of those Jews of Palestine who had avoided dispersion after the final desperate revolt against the Roman Empire in 132 AD.[54] Most of the Arabs were Moslems. The great majority lived a traditional rural way of life in small villages scattered throughout the country. A sizeable minority were Bedouin-nomads – and only a fraction of the population was urban. The agricultural economy of the country was based on a semi-feudal system of land ownership rooted in practices of the Ottoman Empire in which land was owned by an elite class of absentee landlords and worked by tenant farmers. A clear class division existed between the latter, the *fellahin*, and the landowners, the *effendis*. The country was poor, underdeveloped and badly managed, and in consequence, the living conditions of the overwhelming majority bordered on destitution.

The defeat and breakup of the Ottoman Empire at the end of World War I brought in its wake radical changes. The Balfour Declaration of November 1917 recognised the historical ties of the Jewish people to the land of Israel and the right of the Jewish people to a national homeland in Palestine. The Mandate for Palestine, assigned to the British by the San Remo Conference of the League of Nations in April 1920, included a provision for the establishment of a national homeland for the Jewish people in Palestine.

The *Yishuv* – the modern Jewish community built by the primarily European Zionist settlers in Palestine during the mandatory era – developed almost in isolation from the Arab community, unaware at first of the numerical preponderance of the Arab population. They saw the Arabs as benefiting from the progress and technological developments which they introduced into the country, and naively underestimated Arab hostility.

The Zionist settlers wanted to establish a state in part of Palestine; the Arabs considered them to be foreign colonisers and insisted on possessing the entire territory, opposing with armed force the 1947 United Nations General Assembly Resolution on the partition of Palestine. While in 1947 the Arabs were the majority in the country, numbering 68 per cent of the total population, by the end of the 1948 war, their numbers had dropped to a record low of less than 13 per cent. During the war, some 400 villages were destroyed or abandoned. The Arab elite – essential professionals such as teachers, doctors, and lawyers as well as religious and political leaders – fled the country; communication with the Arab leadership in the large towns of the West Bank became impossible; the economy collapsed. The minority which remained, mainly *fellahin*, were left without leadership and services, helpless and dependent on the Jewish state.[55]

Changing conditions and new realities

The relationship which developed between the Arab minority and the Jewish majority in Israel was one of dependence of the former on the latter. While the original causes of this dependence were structural, it was also deliberately fostered by a policy which Eisenstadt describes as 'a special type of relatively benign, but also restrictive, semi-colonial paternalism'.[56] The economic dependence of the Arabs on the Jews was substantial. Arab agriculture was badly hit by the loss of cultivable lands, largely the property of absentee landlords who had fled the country (it is estimated that between 40 and 60 per cent of Arab land

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holdings were expropriated between 1948 and 1967). The predominantly subsistence agriculture became cash-oriented, making the remaining Arab peasants reliant on the Jews for farming technology and marketing. Many Arab villagers sought work in the Jewish sector, outside their place of residence.[57]

The radical transformation of the Arab economy is evidenced by the following statistics: in 1950, 50 per cent of the non-Jewish population worked in agriculture, and 22 per cent in industry, construction and transport. In 1985, 11.7 per cent worked in agriculture and 55.4 per cent in industry, construction, mining and transport.[58] The Arab sector to this day has little industry and is largely dependent on the Jewish sector for employment opportunities. However, Arabs have shared in the benefits of the Israeli welfare state and the generally high standard of living; much of Arab labour is organised and Arabs have been full-fledged members of the *Histadrut* since 1959.

Upon the establishment of the State, recognition and acceptance of the Arabs as citizens were manifested in the formal granting of citizenship and the right to vote, and in the extension of basic public services – education, health, municipal services, and so forth – to the Arab population. However, this democratic attitude was limited by considerations of security and by apprehension regarding the loyalty of the Arabs who had remained in Israel. Thus Arabs were exempted from military service (with the exception of the Druse community, whose members are drafted under the National Service Law at their request, and volunteers from the Bedouin and Christian Arab communities).

Until 1966, a military administration, vested with broad powers, including the authority to suspend civil freedoms and to restrict free movement of Arabs throughout the country, was imposed in most Arab-populated areas. The leadership vacuum created by the flight of the political elite facilitated a process of cooptation of accommodating leaders, usually traditional heads of village *hamulot* (clans), a social structure which had become eroded but was now strengthened and encouraged. These in turn were heavily supported and elected on client Arab lists to the *Knesset* and local government, and served as a base for indirect control. Local government in Israel is generally heavily dependent on central government. In the specific case of the Arab localities, community development – dependent on the extension of subsidies and services – was often affected by the localities' record of cooperation with the administration. The Arab Departments established ostensibly to deal with the special problems of the Arab minority (the Arab Educational section of the Ministry of Education and Culture, the Prime Minister's Advisor on Arab Affairs, the Arab Departments of the *Histadrut* and the major political parties, and so forth) were headed by Arabic-speaking Jews, thus exerting yet another form of paternalistic control and blocking the emergence of an autonomous leadership.

The abolition of the military government in 1966 marked the beginning of a continuous process of liberalisation of policy and reduction of dependence. Two five-year plans for Arab village development were carried out, civil rights became better protected, and more attention began to be paid to the Arabs' special needs. A younger, well-educated generation of Arabs became more vocal in its demands and outspoken in its criticism of discriminatory practices.[59]

The dilemma of the Israeli Arab was expressed by one of them in the 1960s: 'I sometimes think that we are neither real Arabs nor real Israelis, because in the Arab countries they call us traitors and in Israel – spies'.[60] The precarious equilibrium between these conflicting loyalties was profoundly shaken by the 1967 war and the renewal of ties with the Palestinians of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Although not stopping or reversing the process of the Israeli Arabs' integration into the Israeli social fabric, it furthered their political opposition to and alienation from the system, and introduced a parallel process of growing 'Palestinisation'. The *Intifada*, the revolt of the Arab population of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip against the continuing occupation by Israel has considerably exacerbated the 're-Palestinisation' of the Israeli Arab.

Social change and modernisation

Arab society in Israel remains largely rural and traditional. More than 85 per cent of Israeli Arabs are concentrated in over 100 rural villages in three areas of the country: the Galilee in the north, the Little Triangle in the (eastern) centre, and the Negev in the south, where most of the Bedouin are now settled in villages. It is a society in transition from traditionalism to modernity; it also occupies the status of a national minority. Most of the changes which have taken place in the life of Arabs in Israel can be related to these two factors, which impinge on each other: the process of modernisation and their status as a political and socio-economic minority. An example is the transformation in economic status and employment. As outside work has replaced agriculture as the main source of income, the Arab peasant has undergone a process of proletarianisation. He is a direct participant in the Jewish industrial economy, in daily contact with urban Jewish society, which in his eyes represents modern Western society and its different lifestyles and values. Wage labour outside the village has lessened dependence on traditional social structures and cultural patterns, attenuated the influence of the extended family (the traditional socio-economic unit in rural Arab society in Israel), blunted traditional class differences and accelerated the process of modernisation. Modernisation manifests itself in far-reaching structural and cultural changes, such as the growth of individual autonomy; the replacement of ascriptive by achievement-based status; democratisation of the family atmosphere; the changing role of women and increased political awareness and activism.[61]

The education of Arabs in Israel has been especially influenced by these two interrelated factors: minority status and modernisation. Education, once the exclusive preserve of the wealthy and well-born, has come to be perceived as a universal right, as well as the key to upward mobility. A 1976 survey reveals that the Israeli Arab has clearly adopted Western status aspirations and criteria and shares the Jews' high regard for education. Although 72 per cent had at best an elementary school education and 80 per cent were employed in low-status blue-collar occupations, 94 per cent of the respondents wanted their children to acquire a full university education and 84 per cent were willing to finance it.[62] Modernisation has brought Jews and Arabs into closer contact and interaction with each other and led Israeli Arabs to aspire to the Jews' higher socio-economic status and educational level.

Israeli Arabs compare their progress not in absolute terms to their own former lower achievements or to those of Arabs elsewhere, but to that of the Jews.[63] Increased contact and comparison with the Jews has sharply heightened the Arabs' sense of relative deprivation and resentment and reinforced their identification of themselves as an oppressed national minority. The process of cultural adaptation which accompanies modernisation is counter-balanced by a process of cultural and ethnic differentiation and by the crystallisation of a distinct Arab national identity.[64] Rapid cultural change has also had a negative impact on family life, as is often the case in modernising societies: '... a situation exists in which the value and cultural orientation of many parents has been lost, their self-confidence has been weakened, and even their authority, derived from tradition, is breaking down ... the familiar conventions of the traditional culture no longer have the same force, and new conventions have not yet developed.'[65]

Arab education in Israel

During the 30 years of British rule over Palestine, Arab education slowly developed and expanded and schools were established in many villages. Elementary education was free but not compulsory, and most schools offered only a four-year programme. Unlike the Jewish educational system, which was autonomous, the Arab school system was directed and supervised by British officials. Although education became more widespread and available during this period, it still remained the privilege of the few. As late as 1946, only 30 per cent of the school-age population was enrolled, as compared to 8 per cent in 1914 during Turkish rule.[66] With the establishment of the State of Israel, education for all children between the ages of five and 14 became compulsory.

Recognition of the rights of the Arab minority to a separate cultural and religious identity meant the establishment of a separate educational system. The maintenance of segregated educational systems has consistently been favoured by both the Jews and Arabs and neither has ever demanded integration; as a national minority, the Arabs perceive integration as a threat to their identity and way of life.[67] Thus a separate Department of Arab Education was set up within the Ministry of Education and Culture – for many years directed and supervised by Arab-speaking Jews, a reflection of the dependent status of Israeli Arabs and the paternalistic control exerted by the government.

Nowhere is the identity crisis of the Israeli Arabs, nor the dilemmas they face, more clearly revealed than in the educational system. Nor is the dilemma in which the system finds itself easily resolved. As stated by an Israeli educator in 1951, it remains no less poignant today: 'How can we encourage loyalty to Israel among Israeli Arabs without demanding a negation of Arab aspirations on the one hand, and without permitting the development of hostile Arab nationalism on the other? How to bridge not only differences, but also antagonisms? How to achieve synthesis of the central values of the majority culture and those of the minority?'[68] For the first two decades, the simplistic answer was to skirt around the dilemmas. While the Jewish curriculum stressed national consciousness and identification with national goals, the Arab curriculum ignored or avoided nationalist elements and blurred national identity, demanding of the Arab student profound knowledge of purely Jewish subjects at the expense of learning about his own culture, in order to inculcate loyalty to the state.[69] Anton Shammas, an Israeli Arab writer, eloquently describes this system, in which he was educated: 'The system of Arab education produced a "tongueless people", more at home with 7th century Arab poetry than with the 20th century; they are people without a cultural past and without a future. There is only a makeshift present and an attenuated personality'.[70]

Abolition of the military government in 1966 led to the increasing integration of Arabs into the Israeli economy and to a substantial rise in the standard of living; moreover, a generation born in Israel reached maturity, speaking fluent Hebrew and better educated than their parents, but keenly aware of the dilemma of national identity.[71] Moreover, the 1967 war and the subsequent Israeli occupation of the West Bank ended the 'cultural quarantine' of the Israeli Arabs.[72] The combination of these factors, as well as a growing awareness of the inadequacies of the earlier approach, led to a number of efforts to define relevant and meaningful goals for Arab education, none of them particularly successful.

Paradoxically, the denial of Arab nationalist content and aspirations by the formal educational system leads students to look to other sources to satisfy their hunger for identity – non-formal education and the mass media. The many radio and television broadcasts received from neighbouring Arab countries have helped to fulfill this need and have gained special significance.[73]

The achievements of the Arab educational system can be seen as positive or negative, depending on one's focus. Viewed in absolute terms, the achievements of the Arab educational system are undeniable. Illiteracy, in 1960 still 49.5 per cent, had by 1985 been reduced to 13.6 per cent – not surprising in view of the young median age of the Arab population and the enforcement of compulsory education. At the other end of the scale, the percentage of those with 13 or more years of education rose from 1.5 per cent in 1960 to 8.4 per cent in 1985. The percentage of girls attending school rose from 21 per cent in 1946 to 78 per cent in 1973.[74] Whereas in 1948 there had been only one partial Arab high school in the country, which graduated its first class of 15 in 1952, by 1984 there were 4,000 college and university students, 2,000 graduates and 25,000 high-school students.[75]

The comparative perspective is less sanguine. Classes are large, overcrowded and lack facilities. There are insufficient vocational schools and schools for working youth, and only 50 per cent of potential students go on to secondary education. Arabs have not attained equal status in education. The higher the level, the greater the discrepancy between Jewish and Arab education: the percentage of Jews with some post-secondary education is three times greater than the Arab percentage. The 1973 Prime Minister's Commission on Children and Youth in Distress estimated that some 50 per cent of Arab children were 'disadvantaged'. Yet, most extraordinarily, there is no official recognition of the existence of 'cultural disadvantage' in the Arab sector. Unlike the Oriental Jews, Arabs have not been 'culturally uprooted'; they have therefore not been eligible for inclusion in the Educational Welfare Project or other enrichment programmes for the disadvantaged; nor has Arab education benefited from money collected by Jewish organisations in the Diaspora.[76] (A recent effort to remedy this situation was the 'adoption' of the Arab neighbourhood of Jaffa by the Jewish Community of Los Angeles, under the auspices of Project Renewal.) Nor do Arab municipalities have the financial resources garnered through local rates in advantaged communities which enable them to develop adequate educational infrastructures. While the absolute gap may have narrowed, the relative gap is wider than ever.

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Publications

Except where otherwise shown, the following publications are available free of charge to interested individuals and organisations. Please write to Publications and Media Unit, Bernard van Leer Foundation, PO Box 82334, 2508 EH, The Hague, The Netherlands.

Newsletter
The Foundation Newsletter reports on the work of Foundation-supported projects throughout the world and provides information on issues related to early childhood care and education. Published four times a year (January, April, July and October) in English. Copies of most back issues are available on request. ISSN 0921-5840

The work of the Bernard van Leer Foundation
An introductory leaflet about the aims and work of the Foundation. Published 1989 in English, Spanish, Portuguese and Dutch.

A Small Awakening: the work of the Bernard van Leer Foundation 1965-1986. Hugh Philp with Andrew Chetley
Based on research undertaken by Professor Hugh Philp, the Foundation Consultant for Australasia, this publication traces the development of the Foundation through its projects and other activities over a 20 year period. From an initial focus on compensatory education, the Foundation's work has evolved, in the light of experience, to its present emphasis on the development of children in the context of their own environments. Published 1988 in English. ISBN 90-6195-015-5

Beyond Child Survival: towards a new future. Report of the Bernard van Leer Foundation, 1986-1987
The second biennial report of the Bernard van Leer Foundation covers activities during the years 1986 and 1987. The report includes feature articles on projects in Mozambique, Singapore, Ireland, Italy, Trinidad and Colombia as well as summaries of work undertaken during the period in 40 developing and industrialised countries. Published 1988 in English. ISSN 0921-5921

The Power to Change. Andrew Chetley
This book describes how a project which was originally focused on pre-school children in one village has grown to affect the lives of communities throughout the Costa Atlántica region of Colombia. To be published in 1990

Occasional Papers

Early Childhood Care and Education: the Challenge, Walter Barker (Occasional Paper No 1)
The first in a series of Occasional Papers addressing issues of major importance to policy makers, practitioners and academics concerned with meeting the educational and developmental needs of disadvantaged children. Published 1987 in English.

Meeting the Needs of Young Children: Policy Alternatives, Glen Nimnicht and Marta Arango with Lydia Hearn (Occasional Paper No 2)
The paper reviews conventional, institution-based approaches to the care and education of young children in disadvantaged societies and proposes the development of alternative, low-cost strategies which take account of family and community resources and involvement as the starting point for such programmes. Published 1987 in English.

Evaluation in Action: a case study of an under-fives centre in Scotland, Joyce Watt (Occasional Paper No 3)
The main body of this paper is the evaluation report of a Foundation- supported project in the United Kingdom. It is preceded by an examination of the issues involved in evaluation together with an explanation of the way in which this particular study was carried out. It has been published with the external evaluator in mind, but will be of interest to all those involved in the evaluation of community-oriented projects. Published 1988 in English. ISBN 90-6195-014-7

Seminar Reports

Children and community: progressing through partnership
Summary report and conclusions of the tenth International Seminar held in Kingston, Jamaica in November 1988. Published 1989 in English and Spanish. ISBN 90-6195-016-3

Children at the Margin: a challenge for parents, community and professionals
Summary report and conclusions of the third Eastern Hemisphere Seminar held in Newcastle, Australia in November 1987. Published 1988 in English. ISBN 90-6195-013-9

The Parent as Prime Educator: changing patterns of parenthood
Summary report and conclusions of the fourth Western Hemisphere Seminar held in Lima, Peru in May 1986. Published 1986 in English, Spanish, Portuguese and French.

Multicultural Societies: early childhood education and care
Summary report and conclusions of an International Seminar held in Granada, Spain in June 1984. Published 1984 in English, Spanish and Portuguese.

Integrated and Early Childhood Education: Preparation for Social Development
Summary report and conclusions of the second Eastern Hemisphere Seminar held in Salisbury, Zimbabwe, February/ March 1981. Published 1981 in English.

The following publications are available through bookselllers or as shown. They are not available from the Foundation.

Explorations in Early Childhood Education, John Braithwaite
1985, Victoria, The Australian Council for Educational Research, Radford House, Frederick Street, Hawthorn, Victoria 3122, Australia. A$20 plus A$3 handling charge. ISBN 0-85563-478-2

The Gifted Disadvantaged: a ten year longitudinal study of compensatory education in Israel, Moshe Smilansky & David Nevo
1979, London/New York/Paris, Gordon & Breach Inc., 50 West 23rd Street, New York, NY 10022, USA. US$ 46.25. ISBN 0-677-04400-0

The following four books are available, price £2.50 each, from Community Education Development Centre, Briton Road, Coventry, CV2 4LF, England. Please add £0.50 per £5.00 value of order for postage, plus £1.00 per order for overseas postage.

Women and Children First: Home Link, Elizabeth Filkin (ed)
This book presents an account of the Home Link project which has been serving residents of Liverpool, England continuously since 1973. Elizabeth Filkin has edited the work of a large group of women contributors to provide an open and self-critical assessment of the programme. Ypsilanti, The High/Scope Press, 1984. ISBN 0-931114-26-8

A Mole Cricket called Servol, Gerard Pantin
In 1970 the newly independent nation of Trinidad and Tobago was rocked by a social explosion, and the effect on the traditional, easy-going way of life was catastrophic. This book describes how a Trinidadian Roman Catholic priest and a West Indian cricket player, went into the areas of poverty to try to help. Ypsilanti, The High/Scope Press, 1983. ISBN 0-931114-17-9

The Servol Village, Gerard Pantin
This book continues the story begun in **A Mole Cricket called Servol** and describes how Servol has grown from a street corner community development

project to a national movement in its own right. Ypsilanti, The High/Scope Press, 1984. ISBN 0-931114-27-6

Seeking Change, Ann Short
This book describes an early childhood education project for the children of disadvantaged families in South Africa. Ypsilanti, The High/Scope Press, 1984. ISBN 0-931114-29-2

The four books below report on the outcomes of the Project on Human Potential (1979-1984) supported by the Foundation and carried out by the Graduate School of Education of Harvard University, USA. They are available through booksellers.

Frames of Mind: the theory of multiple intelligences, Howard Gardner
New York, Basic Books, 1983. ISBN 0 465 02509 9 Available in paperback edition: Paladin Books, London, 1985, £5.95. ISBN 0-586-08506-8

Of Human Potential: an essay in the philosophy of education, Israel Scheffler
Boston/London/Melbourne, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985. ISBN 0-7102-0571-6

The Cultural Transition: human experience and social transformation in the Third World and Japan, Merry I White & P Pollack(eds)
Boston/London/Melbourne, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1986. ISBN 0-7102-0572-4

Human Conditions: the cultural basis of educational developments, Robert A Levine and Merry White
Boston/London/Melbourne, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1986. ISBN 0-7102-0568-6

What do the projects do?

All projects supported by the Foundation have, at their core, the education, care and development of young children. An essential ingredient of projects is the close involvement of the parents of the children and of the surrounding community. This is based on the belief that the home is the most important environment affecting human development, and that the community is also important. Projects do not therefore look only at educational activities which take place in pre-schools, nurseries or primary schools, they work with adults in their own homes and in the community in order to create understanding and awareness of children's developmental needs. This can include the importance of play, making toys and equipment from scrap materials and from the natural environment, information and advice on nutrition and health, and other needs of the children or the community. Many of the people doing this work are women from the same community who have been trained by the project. The involvement of parents and other adults helps to build up their own skills and self-confidence and this, in turn, leads to other improvements in the social and physical structure and the self-assurance of the community as a whole.

Geographical span

In accordance with its statutes, the Foundation gives preference to countries in which the Van Leer group of companies is established.

Applications for suppport

Decisions concerning the funding of major projects are taken by the Board of Trustees of the Foundation. No commitments can be given before such approval by the Board. There are no application forms and the Foundation does not prescribe a rigid formula for proposals. Potential applicants are strongly advised to submit an outline of their aims and objectives before preparing a detailed proposal.

Funds can be made available for the implementation of innovatory projects in the field of early childhood care and education. Applicants can be public bodies, academic or non-governmental institutions, or voluntary organisations. Grants are not given to individuals or for general support to organisations or in response to general appeals. The Foundation does not provide study, research or travel grants.

The Foundation recognises that projects in its field of work require time to develop and implement new approaches and grants are normally made for more than one year. The long-term sustainability of a project is an important consideration in the appraisal of proposals.